

**The Nature and Role of Church  
Schools in the Mission of the  
Church**

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## ABSTRACT

This study addresses the question of church schools' compatibility with the tradition of liberal education and the extent to which these schools contribute to intolerance in society. Critics of church schools argue that the religious foundation of church schools contributes little to their academic success and that any school with a similar pupil intake will be academically successful. Critics therefore advocate removal of church schools from the English education system. However, using the evidence in the relevant literature, research studies, and eighty Church of England and Roman Catholic schools' prospectuses, this study argues that church schools understand and express their nature as: (i) denominational; (ii) voluntary-aided; and (iii) comprehensive. This understanding is crucial to the schools' approach to their role of providing pupils with skills necessary to live in all forms of society. The skills provided in church schools stem from the Christian understanding of Man as made in the image of God to share in, and provide stewardship for, the created order. In conclusion, this study rejects the argument that church schools: (i) contribute to intolerance in society; (ii) indoctrinate pupils; and (iii) undermine pupils' autonomy for the following reasons:

1. The schools provide Christian education which accepts differences in human nature and prepares individuals to live in diverse communities.
2. Christian education is incompatible with coercion and manipulation.
3. Christian education provides opportunity for pupils either to accept or to reject the Christian faith or teaching.

## Dedication

To my beloved mother, Grace, whose death on 11 December 1997 inspired me to embark on research into Christian education with the view of starting a school in Ghana in her memory.

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### **List of Abbreviations**

BBC:	British Broadcasting Cooperation
BFSS:	British and Foreign School Society
BHA:	British Humanist Association
BSA:	British Secular Association
CES:	Catholic Education Service
CoE:	Church of England
CSTTM:	Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium
DED:	Diocesan Education Director
DES:	Department of Education and Science
DFES:	Department for Education and Skills
ERA:	Education Reform Act
FSM:	Free school meal
GE:	‘Gravissimum Educationis’
GCSE:	General Certificate of Secondary School Education
LEA:	Local Education Authority
MP:	Member of Parliament
NC:	National Curriculum
NSS:	National Secular Society
NT:	New Testament
OFSTED:	Office for Standards in Education
OT:	Old Testament
Para:	Paragraph
RDECS:	The Religious Dimension of Education in a Roman Catholic School
RE:	Religious Education
SCAA:	Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority
SCCE:	Sacred Congregation for Roman Catholic Education
SEN:	Special Educational Needs
SMT:	Senior Management Team
SPCK:	Society for the Propagating of Christian Knowledge
SSM:	Sunday School Movement

### **List of Abbreviations Continued**

UA:	Unauthorised Absence
UK:	United Kingdom
USA:	United States of America
VA:	Voluntary-Aided
VC:	Voluntary-Controlled

Unless otherwise stated, all scriptural quotations in this study are from the Revised Standard Version of the Holy Bible (1971), London: Eyre & Spottiswoode.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

## **1.1 The aim of the study**

The aim of this study is threefold. First, it investigates and evaluates church schools’<sup>1</sup> own understanding of their nature and role in the church’s mission<sup>2</sup>. Second, it explores the charge that church schools undermine individual autonomy and are therefore incompatible with liberal education. Third, it investigates the extent to which the schools’ understanding of their nature and role in the church’s mission contributes to intolerance in society. The underlying purpose of the threefold aim is to contribute to the current debate in England on the nature and role of faith-based (church) schooling in the English education system. It also hopes to provide some indicative findings to interest and inform educators, policy-makers, researchers, the church, church schools and students of education and religion, and to give the discussion a more informed base.

## **1.2 The need for the study**

Church schools, as the evidence<sup>3</sup> shows, perform better than most maintained schools in England in public examinations. This factor has made church schools consistently popular with parents in that the schools are regularly oversubscribed. The reasons given for the academic achievement of church schools include greater pastoral care of pupils, skilful teaching and high standards of discipline which is made possible because of a philosophy rooted in the Christian conception of a human being.

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<sup>1</sup> See Section 2:7 for the definition of a church school for this study

<sup>2</sup> In its widest sense, the church consists of those who have been called out of the world into a community of faith - ‘called...out of darkness into his marvellous light’ (1 Peter 2:9). However, for the purpose of this study, the term ‘church’ is used to refer to institutions such as Church of England, Roman Catholic, and Methodist and so on. The mission of the church is therefore deemed the denominational interpretation of Christ’s command to ‘make disciples’ (Matt. 28:19) which includes evangelism and service (detailed discussion in chapter six).

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for a sample of schools’ performance table



However, critics attribute church schools' high academic achievement to a selective pupil-intake based on social class, academic ability, or to the schools' location in middle class areas to attract those parents who know how to make effective use of education, rather than to any internal factors or Christian values in the schools. For these reasons, critics argue that any school with the advantage of a selective or 'better' intake of pupils (irrespective of faith background) would achieve better than average results as it appears to be evident in the BBC, 177 top schools in England, 2005.<sup>4</sup> The identification of the underlying factors for church schools' academic achievement has generated an active debate in the media, among pressure groups such as the British Secular Association (BSA), British Humanist Association (BHA) and other activists such as members of Parliament (MPs) (Taylor, 2005). However, some important questions regarding the underlying internal factors for church schools' achievements remain unanswered<sup>5</sup>. This study is an attempt to provide some answers and explanations for such unanswered questions. The uncertainty about the underlying factors of church schools' academic achievements, coupled with some national and international events that occurred in 2001, intensified the debate on the nature and role of such schools in modern English society. The following are some of the events in 2001 that fuelled the 'faith school' debate.

- The publication of the Government Green Paper, 'Schools Building on Success' (February 2001), indicated the government's willingness to create new partnerships between local education authorities and other agencies, including businesses and churches, to take over and run failing schools. The subsequent White Paper (September 2001), Schools

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<sup>4</sup> Appendix B is an example of a performance table of schools with selective pupil intake

<sup>5</sup> David Blunkett, when Secretary of State for Education in the UK, said that he wished he could "bottle" the secret of church schools' success, because they tended to perform better than their secular counterparts'. (Independent 24<sup>th</sup> Feb. 2001)

Achieving Success, confirmed the drive to involve the private sector - including the churches - in failing schools.

- A Review Group commissioned by the Anglican Archbishops' Council (2001) to explore and make recommendations on the achievements and future development of church schools recommended that the Church of England should take the initiative to set up new schools or to expand existing provision of secondary schools to the equivalent of one hundred over a ten-year period.
- The troubles of the Holy Cross Infant school in Ardoyne, Belfast and community troubles in the north of England (Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, 2001) were seen as evidence to support the view that church schools were divisive, even though the report of Sir Herman Ouseley and Ted Cantles' did not reach that conclusion.
- The terrorist attack on the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York (September 11, 2001) that killed several thousand people. This is probably the most serious of the four, and the event with the longest-lasting effect.

The listed events led groups such as the BSA and BHA to advocate withdrawal of state funding for church (faith-based) schools for the reason that they encouraged division and promoted racial segregation (McVeigh, 2001). Sheerman<sup>6</sup> puts it thus:

Schools play a crucial role in integrating different communities and the growth of faith schools poses a real threat to this. These things need to be thought through very carefully before they are implemented (Taylor in 'The Guardian', 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2005).

The implication is that church (faith-based) schools are a threat to the social cohesion and integration of modern English society. However, such an implication makes a flawed assumption which contradicts that of this study.

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<sup>6</sup> Mr Barry Sheerman (MP) was the chairman of the UK House of Commons Education Select Committee, who warned that religious schools posed a threat to the cohesion of multicultural communities.

### **1.3 The assumption of the study**

This study assumes the following: (i) Faith-based [*church, for this study*] schools are an essential tool for a vibrant, thriving, multi-cultural and -faith society such as England. Thus such schools are essential for social cohesion and tolerance in society. (ii) Faith-based schools are necessary to provide an alternative education to that of secularism in modern English society, (iii) The Christian understanding of ‘Man’<sup>7</sup> could, and should, provide the basis of Christian education theory and practice which should distinguish the church schools from local education authority (LEA) or non-church schools’ (LEA) education.

### **1.4 The organisation of the study**

This study falls into five main parts. The first part comprises this Chapter (One) and Chapter Two. These set the scene for the study. This chapter introduces the purpose, need, assumption and organisation of the study. Chapter Two traces the historical development of church schools in England and establishes a working definition of a ‘church school.’ It points out that a church school is more than a building: it provides a unique environment for individual children and adults to experience and live the Christian faith. It concludes that a church school, for this study, is a church-run voluntary-aided school within the mainstream which undertakes the activities of general education in a Christian context or combines Christian nurture and academic instruction with a view to a Christian commitment. It then raises the question of the

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<sup>7</sup> A brief comment is necessary on the supposedly ‘sexist’ nature of the word ‘Man’ to describe the human race (male and female). Over the centuries covered by the Christian scripture and tradition ‘Man’ was the accepted word for the human race. This means that the subsequent use of ‘Man’ refers to the whole of human race, man and woman.

relevance of church schools in modern English society for chapter three to explore. The second part of the study comprises Chapters Three and Four. It seeks to answer the question of church schools' relevance in modern England by examining selected literature in the field. Chapter three explores the nature of liberal education theory and the extent to which education in church schools satisfies its requirement. It outlines four philosophical issues in relation to church schools' compatibility with liberal education, and takes the view that church schools are: (i) philosophically defensible and (ii) compatible with liberal education. Chapter Four reviews a selection of recent research studies, originating in England, made on church schools since 2001, and reflecting the factors underpinning this study. It concludes that such research studies are limited and scarce; with methodologies which failed to allow church schools' own understanding of their nature and mission to surface. Therefore it argues for an inquiry or a study with a different methodology such as the one employed for this study (see Chapter Five) to discover church schools' self-understanding of their nature and mission in relation to the church. The third part comprises chapter five which describes and explains the research approaches and fieldwork for this study. It sets out the aims of the empirical study, the research questions, the strategy adopted for data collection, the reasons for the selected method, the role of the researcher, and ethical considerations. The fourth part comprises Chapters Six, Seven and Eight. Chapter Six draws on the examination of the data for forty Church of England (CoE), forty Roman Catholic (RC) and forty non-church or local education authority (LEA) schools (The criteria for selection are set out in Section 5.4). The data are examined with reference to: (i) the preceding chapters (Chapters One - Five); (ii) a number of

public educational documents from the two denominations (CoE and RC); and (iii) the Ofsted (2003/4) and the 1996 School Inspection Act, Section 23 reports (hereafter Section 23 inspection reports). Examination of the data shows church schools' understanding of their nature as denominational, voluntary- aided and comprehensive. The significance of this understanding stems from the fact that the church schools' education is rooted in the view of 'Man'<sup>8</sup> as made in the image of God. With that understanding, Chapter Seven explores the significance and the implication of the church schools' understanding of their nature for Christian education. It argues that Christian education should teach all desirable subjects in the school curriculum in a Christian environment. Thus the church schools' educational mission should be to provide an environment for individuals and groups of people to be reconciled to God and grow in Christian spirituality. Chapter Eight provides a general conclusion to the whole study by drawing on all the preceding chapters. It concludes that church schools are a necessity in a secular English society in order to provide an alternative education to the secular education offered in LEA schools. The chapter finally evaluates the effectiveness and limitations of the adopted research method for this study and makes recommendations for future studies.

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<sup>8</sup> A brief comment is necessary on the supposedly 'sexist' nature of the word 'Man' to describe the human race (male and female). Over the centuries covered by the Christian scripture and tradition 'Man' was the accepted word for the human race. This means that the subsequent use of 'Man' refers to the whole of human race, man and woman.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **HISTORY OF CHURCH SCHOOLS IN ENGLAND**

## **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter traces the history and the development of church schools in England, in order to provide a working understanding of a ‘church school’ for this study. It begins with the church understanding of the nature of its schools as a place set apart for training priests (i) to guard against heresy; and (ii) to prepare new converts. It argues that some individual Christians initiated the extension of church schools’ mission from training priests to teaching young people not destined for the priesthood to learn to read, to write and to lead a virtuous life. Such an extension of church schools’ mission marked the beginning of free universal education for all young people in England. The chapter concludes that a church school, for this study, is a non-fee-paying church-run institution within the mainstream schooling system which undertakes the activities of general education in a Christian context with a view to a Christian commitment.

## **2.2 The development of church schools**

A church school during the Middle Ages was for training young men for the priesthood. As such, it had strong connections with cathedrals, monasteries and chantries (Cruickshank, 1963; Williams, 1965). However, the Reformation and its emphasis on a more personal quest for knowledge provided the church with an added impetus to establish schools for pupils other than candidates for the priesthood. This saw schools such as St Paul’s (1509), Shrewsbury (1552), Westminster (1560), Merchant Taylors (1561), Rugby (1567), Harrow (1571) and Charterhouse (1611) established in England (Kay and Francis, 1997; Hughes, 2000). Common features of

such schools were the established link with the church and the requirement for pupils to attend worship regularly. Another common feature was that they were fee-paying schools open to boys from the ruling class and to a few 'poor and needy scholars of good character and well-conditioned' (Williams, 1965). However, as the next sections will show, free universal education for both rich and poor children was the ultimate educational goal of the Christian church. The end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century witnessed an unprecedented generosity on the part of some Christian individuals who donated funds for the establishment of Christian educational institutions to provide an education for poorer young people in their respective parishes. Several different types of schools, such as Dame and Common Day schools, were established to that end, but parents were expected to contribute financially. The charging of a fee naturally excluded some of the very poorest children from these schools. This apparent exclusion of the poorest young people from education in Christian institutions appeared to have undermined their stated aims. However, even with the benefit of hindsight, it is difficult to see how Dame and Common Day schools could have survived without charging a small fee, since most, if not all, of the minders and teachers of both school systems needed to earn a living. These schools were really no different from today's private, church-sponsored or church independent schools, whose continued well-being or survival depends on charitable donations and the charging of fees to parents who send their children to them. Some education historians (Barnard, 1961; Williams, 1965; Sutherland, 1971) have, nevertheless, argued that the apparent exclusion or pricing out of the poorest children from the schooling system was deliberate and consistent with the



contemporary belief of ‘divine stratification’ of society, to which the discussion now turns.

### **2.3 Divine stratification and church schools**

The exponents of the ‘divine stratification’ theory argued that God had created each person’s estate and that it was the duty of individuals to fulfil their given station in life. The fulfilment of individuals’ ‘station in life’ implied a lack of or restriction on social mobility in order to safeguard the accepted norms or the *status quo* of the contemporary society. However, there were genuine fears that ‘too much education or schooling would simply make the working poor discontented with their lot’ (Chitty, 2004). The fears were succinctly expressed by Mr Davis Giddy,<sup>9</sup> a Tory MP who, in 1807, told the House of Commons the following:

Giving education to the labouring classes of the poor ... would teach them to despise their lot in life; instead of making them good servants in agriculture and other laborious employments to which their rank in society has destined them; instead of teaching them the virtue of subordination, it would render them factious and refractory ... it would enable them to read seditious pamphlets, vicious books and publications against Christianity (Hansard, cols. 798-99).

The expressed concerns show, on one hand, the exponents of the theory’s inadvertent admission that education provided tools for both children and adults to change their ‘station in life’ and to improve their social mobility. It was also an inadvertent admission that education enabled poor people to question the validity of the theory that their ‘station in life’ was to be labourers or domestic servants (Barnard, 1961). On the other hand, since the line between social order and chaos was a fine one, the

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<sup>9</sup> Mr Davis Giddy attacked the Parochial Schools Bill of 1807

insistence on education as a means of maintaining social order was at least a valid concern, even if the validity was limited. However, none of the views expressed could undermine or reduce the liberating effect of education in terms of raising individuals' self-esteem. Thus education provided pupils with knowledge that challenged the established norms or beliefs in contemporary English society. There is evidence in the Scriptures to support the liberating nature of knowledge acquired through education. The Old Testament (OT) asserts that lack of knowledge prevents the people of God from being what He intends them to be. Hosea puts it in this way: 'My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge' (4:6). In the Gospel of John, Jesus endorses the liberating effect of education in the following terms, '...you will know the truth;<sup>10</sup> and the truth will make you free' (John 8:32). While the Scriptural quotations do not directly refer to the type of education associated with a church school, they endorse the view that knowledge acquisition is a means of liberation. These religious views make Christian education inconsistent with the 'divine stratification theory' and undermine the view that Christian institutions operated such a policy. These Scriptural views also reject suggestions that Christian involvement in education contributes to intolerance in society. The implication, however, is for the church to embark on educational programmes which equip pupils with a deeper understanding or knowledge of God. Furthermore, the conditions usually attached to the funding of Christian educational establishments undermined any notion of their engagement in the implementation of the 'divine stratification' theory. A classic example of particular conditions attached to funding Christian institutions was the financial

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<sup>10</sup> Jesus identifies himself as the truth: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life...' (John 14:6)

legacy left by the Reverend John Scargill in 1664 with the following stipulations:

Alsoe my will and mind is that the...schoolmaster...an honest, virtuous and sober man...shall apply himself wholly to the teaching of the...schoole and shall offer up the prayers of the Church amongst his scholars morning and evening, and shall endeavour to teach his schollers to read write and...instruct them in the Church Catechism... in the fear of the Lord... Alsoe my will and mind is there shall be twelve persons in this schoole, six to be chosen out of West Hallam...two out of The Dale parish two out of Stanley and two out of Mapperley all of which shall be of the poorer sort...who shall...come to schoole (that is to say) all the yeare except a fortnight at Christmas and in Easter and Whitson weeke ... (cited in Johnson, 1970, p. 14).

Apart from the explicit requirement to include the poor in the school, the content of this legacy specifies the required qualification of a schoolmaster, the role of prayer, curriculum content, admissions policy and even school holidays. Reverend Scargill had an expectation of prayer and carefully selected curriculum content for the school. He equally envisaged that his aim was achievable through a committed and a prayerful schoolmaster. This was an early indication that headteachers are crucial to the exhibition of values underpinning the distinctiveness of church schools.<sup>11</sup> Sutherland (1971) also referred to a group of six tradesmen of St Margaret's, Westminster who erected a free school in the parish to educate the poor 'in sober and virtuous principles, and ... in the Christian religion.' The stated vision of the individual benefactors of Christian educational establishments was championed by the Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SPCK).

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<sup>11</sup> There is evidence in the selected research studies (Chapter Four) that headteachers were the key source of values underpinning church schools.

## **2.4 The Society for Propagating Christian Knowledge (SPCK) and church schools**

The SPCK (1698) ‘saw its prime function as the restoration of morals and religion to a country which was becoming increasingly degenerate and irreligious’ (Morrish, 1970 p. 5).<sup>12</sup> The perceived function of the SPCK identified the nature and purpose of a church school as a place to provide a means for the restoration of the broken moral fabric of the English society. Subsequent Parliamentary Education Acts in 1944 and 1988 recognised the brokenness or ‘lostness’ of the moral fabric of the nation and emphasised the need for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development to permeate the school curriculum to remedy the situation (cf. 1996 Education Act). This raises the question of whether a Christian or charity school was solely an evangelistic or a proselytising tool for the SPCK or the church. To answer the question requires an examination of the nature and purpose of evangelism. The word ‘evangelism’ is basically the proclamation of the Gospel of which Christ is both the bearer and the embodiment (Armstrong, 1983). To evangelise is to tell the good news of Christ and the life of the kingdom of God which He (Christ) represents. A detailed analysis is beyond the scope of this study;<sup>13</sup> however, evangelism is not optional for the Church and its institutions (schools) owing to its mandate from the Lord to proclaim the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20). Johnson (1970) explains how Christian- based (charity) schools engaged in this evangelism by identifying their aims in the following terms:

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<sup>12</sup> cf. Williams, 1965

<sup>13</sup> For a detailed discussion on evangelism see the following: (i) Abraham, W. (1989) *The Logic of Evangelism*, London: Hodder & Stoughton; (ii) Bosch, D. J. (1991) *Transforming Mission*, Maryknoll: Orbis; (iii) Hiebert, P. G. (1994) *Anthropological Reflections on Missiological Issues*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House; (iv) Newbiggin, L. (1989) *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*, London: SPCK; (v) Warren, R. (1995) *The Purpose-Driven Church*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

- to teach spelling, punctuation and reading
- to teach children to write nicely and legibly
- to teach Arithmetic
- to teach girls to knit stockings, gloves and to sew, mend clothes, spin or do any other work to fit them for service and apprenticeships
- to instruct children in the principles of the Christian Religion, as professed in the Church of England and laid down in the Church Catechism
- to take care of the manner and behaviour of poor children and to discourage and correct the beginnings of vice
- to take children to Church twice every Lord's Day and Holy Day
- to pray in the morning and the evening in school and to teach children to do the same at home, when they rise and go to bed (p. 21)

Johnson's list identifies the purpose of Christian involvement in education as to develop social, moral, academic and spiritual aspects of the individual pupils, thus providing education for the whole person. Based on this understanding, church schools could be described as an evangelical tool of the church because they provided a means for young people to acquire a deeper knowledge of God, His love and the church. Furthermore, the schools provided pupils with skills that could set them free academically, socially and spiritually. This endorses the view that a personal relationship with God and academic achievement are necessary ingredients for a holistic education for a person made in the image and likeness of God (see Chapter Six). The church schools therefore employed teachers who subscribed to the Christian philosophy of education which was consistent with the SPCK's guidance to schools in relation to the appointment of teachers. The guidance identified both the philosophy of Christian education and the role of teachers in the maintenance of such an education as set out below. An Anglican school teacher was:

- to be a member of the Church of England
- to be of a sober life and conversation and not under the age of 23 years
- to understand well the grounds and principles of the Christian religion, and be able to give a good account thereof to the Minister of the Parish, or Ordinary, on Examination
- to be of meek temper and humble behaviour
- to have a good government of himself and his passions and keep good orders
- to be frequent at the Holy Communion
- to have a genius for teaching, write a good hand, and understand arithmetic
- to be approved of by the Minister of the Parish (Johnson, 1970, p. 23)

Two themes clearly stand out in relation to the SPCK's view of a Christian institution or a church school for education. First, the CoE schools should appoint teachers whose daily lives reflect the Christian Gospel values. Second, a church school should promote a high standard of teaching and should appoint well-qualified teachers who have good subject knowledge ('genius for teaching, writes a good hand, and understands Arithmetic'). Effectively, as discussed in Section 2:6, the 1944 Education Act provided for church schools to appoint Christian teachers who could advance the vision and purpose of Christian education. The vision and purpose of Christian education was shared and advanced by the Sunday School Movement (SSM). The evangelistic zeal that inspired Christian individuals to donate funds for the establishment of Christian institutions gave birth to the SSM, which provided education on a larger scale for poor young people. There is some debate concerning the origins of SSM. However, the consensus is that Robert Raikes (1735-1811) launched the movement in 1780 (Sutherland, 1971, p. 126). Raikes particularly noted that illiteracy and lack of discipline among the labouring poor had led some into a life

of crime (Morrish, 1970, p. 6). He therefore used his position as the proprietor and editor of the Gloucester Journal to publicise the course of the SSM. He organised some weekday afternoon or evening activities and Sunday schooling 'to get children off the streets and to inculcate in them some sense of decency and order' (Cruickshank, 1963, p. 2). Laquer (1977) echoed this instinct by suggesting that the SSM fostered in pupils values of the 'respectable' which included self-discipline, industry, thrift, improvement, egalitarianism and communalism. Describing the success of the SSM, Lawson wrote:

Chapels are now more inviting - have better music - service of song - which cannot help being attractive to the young as well as beneficial to all. They have sewing classes, bazaars, concerts, and the drama; cricket and football clubs, and harriers; societies for mutual improvement and excursions to the seaside (quoted in Cunningham, 1980, p. 181).

The pedagogy developed by the SSM enabled many children to encounter both the Christian faith and to acquire knowledge to better their 'station in life.' It was, therefore, unsurprising that the SSM gathered momentum and spread throughout England. There were about 2,290 Sunday schools in operation in 1801 and 23,135 by 1851 (Morrish, 1970). Barnard (1961) described the rapid growth of the Sunday schooling as the beginning of free universal education for children in England. The rapid growth of the SSM was also an indication that young people responded well to moral instruction and spiritual guidance in a Christian environment. Thus the development of human spirituality requires an appropriate context to enable critical assessment and reflection of its nature (cf. Newbiggin, 1989).

## **2.5 Denominational schools**

The need for an appropriate context for development of Christian spirituality eventually gave rise to denominational schools in which the so-called ‘monitorial system’ played a major role. Free universal education for poor children found its bolder expression in the monitorial schooling system organised by Dr Andrew Bell (1753-1832) and Joseph Lancaster (1778-1838). The system enabled a large number of pupils to receive a cheap and cost-effective education. It employed a single master or teacher to teach a lesson to a group of older pupils who in turn taught it to younger pupils. However, the emergence of the British and Foreign School Society (BFSS) and the National Society meant focusing on Free Churches and the Church of England respectively. The BFSS sought to establish ecumenical or inter-denominational schools for working-class children of all religious persuasions. Such ecumenism excluded particular religious tenets and encouraged pupils to worship with their parents in their chosen denominations, as expressed in the following terms:

The lesson for reading shall consist of extracts from the Holy Scriptures, - no catechism or peculiar religious tenets shall be taught in the schools, but every child shall be enjoined to attend regularly the place of worship to which its parents belong (Murphy, 1971, p. 4).

The National Society, on the other hand, sought to establish the Church of England as the ‘recognised’ teacher of religion in England because of its relationship with the State (Murphy, 1971). Although the National Society encouraged ecumenism, it expected children attending Anglican schools to learn the Anglican liturgy and to attend its worship regularly. It also insisted upon the use of the Authorised Version of the Bible and upon schoolteachers being Anglicans. Such an approach confirmed the



CoE underlying educational objective which O’Keeffe (1988, p. 188) described as follows: (i) to provide children with numeracy and literacy skills in preparation for work; and (ii) to provide education in the Christian religion. While other Christian denominations might have accepted the CoE educational objectives, its insistence upon the use of the Authorised Version of the Bible and upon pupils’ regular attendance at the CoE worship posed some difficult questions for both the Free and the RC churches. Such requirements contradicted the BFSS’s aim of ecumenical schooling and posed a direct challenge to the RC Church’s vision of providing RC education for every RC child. Based on the National Society’s requirements, RC priests forbade RC parents from sending their children to the Church of England schools, which subsequently led to the establishment of separate RC schools to educate RC children (Murphy, 1971). Gaine (1968, p. 139) asserted that the RC Church was duty bound to establish its own schools in order to fulfil its divine mission of providing RC education (schooling) for all RC children. The assumption of this educational mission was that a RC school was more than an ordinary day school because it offered extra opportunities for RC pupils to meet as a church as is explained by (Grace, 2002, p. 10) in the quotation below:

The Roman Catholic school was constituted as another form of Church and its duty was to transmit and renew the sacred truth, the Roman Catholic faith and an understanding of its discourse, symbols and ritual practices among its largely poor and working class adherents (ibid., p. 8).

The perception of RC schools as an extension of the RC Church placed the onus on RC parents to instruct their children in the RC ‘truth’ and to avoid ‘mixed’ or inter-denominational schools. Gaine (1968) expressed it in the following terms: ‘Catholic

children must not attend non- Catholic schools, neutral, or mixed schools, those opened to non-Catholics’ (p. 268). Such a policy was consistent with Canon 1374, which stipulates thus:

One who joins an association which plots against the Church is to be punished with a just penalty; one who promotes or moderates such an association, however, is to be punished with an interdict (Code of Canon Law, 1983).

Grace (2002, p. xi) has dubbed such a separatist education policy as a ‘secret garden’ which is inconsistent with Vatican II’s declaration on Christian education (Gravissimum Educationis (GE), 1965). The declaration advocated a new form of openness in RC education. Emmet Carter (1966) described this new openness as an ‘Incarnation principle’ of which he wrote: ‘the very principle of the Incarnation is a principle of living in the present.’ Thus the ‘secret garden’ phenomenon is anachronistic and a hindrance to change and undermines Christian integration. GE put it thus:

Christian education is in the world and, in a sense, for the world, since man must always work out his salvation in the concrete situation in which God has placed him and must achieve this not by protection but by contributing to the whole human community of which he is an integral and inseparable part (Carter in Abbott, 1966).

Subsequent RC documents<sup>14</sup> (three especially) have sought to advance the described Incarnation principle in RC education. Particularly significant quotations from each are given in what follows. The first document, ‘The Roman Catholic School: Sacred

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<sup>14</sup> The Roman Catholic School (Sacred Congregation for Roman Catholic Education), 1977; The Religious Dimension of Education in a Roman Catholic School (Vatican Congregation for Roman Catholic Education), 1988; The Roman Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium, 1988

Congregation for Roman Catholic Education (SCCE, 1977), identified the role of a RC school as ‘to reveal to all ages the transcendent goal which alone gives life its full meaning’ (para. 13). This made the aim of a RC school as to engage in an evangelism which involves service to one another as a means of building the kingdom of God.

Knowledge is not to be considered as a means of material prosperity and success, but as a call to serve and to be responsible for others...A policy of working for the common good is undertaken seriously as working for the building up of the kingdom of God (pp. 43-6).

This understanding of the mission of RC schooling places it at the centre of the wider world. The SCCE effectively identified a RC school as providing a particular service for a community, which undermined the ‘secret garden’ phenomenon. The second document, ‘The Religious Dimension of Education in a RC School (RDECS, 1988): ‘Witness to Faith’, emphasised the Biblical concept that each person is assigned a spiritual gift for the common good or the growth of the Christian community (c.f. I Corinthians 12:7). Such an emphasis affirms the uniqueness of individuals (teachers and pupils) in a school community, and in the world which lacks the ultimate meaning and purpose of life. The RDECS therefore identified a RC school as an alternative community which offered a new vision of life and a set of values to counteract the effects of the process of secularisation within society in general. This view is evident in the quotation below:

Many young people find themselves in a condition of radical instability...They live in a one-dimensional universe in which the only criterion is practical utility and the only value is economic and technological progress...Not a few young people, unable to find any meaning in life or trying to find an escape from loneliness, turn to alcohol, drugs, the erotic, the exotic etc. Christian education is faced with the huge challenge of helping these young people discover something of value in their lives (pp.8-10).

This assumed failure of the secular philosophy of education, and argued for the need for Christian values to fill the void created by the process of secularisation. It is this vision that forms the background of a church school community (cf. Chapter Six). The third document, 'The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium' (CSTTM, 1998), provided a realistic assessment of the modern world in which RC schools operated. It accepted that while the institutional church had apparently declined in relevance for many young people, RC schools met their spiritual craving. It therefore advocated the RC school to be a place to offer the Christian values of love, compassion, tolerance, fairness, honesty, to name but a few, to fill the emptiness that secularism had left in young people. With this background, the CSTTM argued for a RC school 'to be a school for all ... those who have lost all sense of meaning for life...[to] these new poor the Catholic school turns in a spirit of love'(paras. 10,15). It accepted that a RC school or education in a community embraced pupils who bore the marks of the undesirable effects of modern society:

The Roman Catholic school is thus confronted with children and young people who experience the difficulties of the present time. Pupils, who shun effort, are incapable of self-sacrifice and perseverance and who lack authentic models to guide them often even in their own families. In an increasing number of instances they are not only indifferent and non-practising but also totally lacking in religious or moral formation (pp. 37-38).

Such pupils and their parents place emphasis on the acquisition of a certificate or evidence of study to enhance their employability. While certification is worthwhile, there is a need for such an acquisition of knowledge to occur in a Christian context based on the Gospel values. While the above discussions have identified individual denominational emphasis upon the nature and mission of their schools, there is evidence of a common strand of providing an alternative education to LEA schools. This common strand stems from the 1870 Education Act which established the ‘Dual System’ of schooling in England. This means a partnership between the State and the church in the provision of schools. It allowed church and LEA schools to exist side by side, and gave a legal status to the following: (i) church schools in England, (ii) denominational religious instruction in denominational schools, and (iii) the teaching of Christianity in non-denominational schools. The provisions of the 1870 Act were confirmed by the 1944 Education Act, which the next section explores.

## **2.6 The 1944 Education Act and church schools**

O’Keeffe (1988) correctly pointed out that the 1944 Education Act constructed a system of education which enabled the church and the State to be partners in its provision. The Act therefore legalised the described partnership, the role of religious education in schools and the nature of church schools. It also enabled two separate categories of church schools – voluntary-aided (VA) and voluntary-controlled (VC) – to exist in modern English society. The status of a church school depended on the extent of the religious and financial independence that a particular denomination wished for its schools. Dearing (2001) wrote:

The [1944] Act provided a new deal in which Church schools were offered the option of increased State funding and control as ‘Voluntary Controlled’ schools or lesser State support and greater independence as ‘Voluntary Aided’ schools.

The Church of England and Roman Catholic churches had differences of opinion in relation to selection of status for their respective schools. The RC Church adopted a unified national policy to maintain the voluntary-aided status of their schools. This means that all the RC schools in England are voluntary-aided. The Church of England, on the other hand, allowed local churches to decide on the status of their local schools. O’Keeffe noted that the net result of the local decisions was that over half of the Church of England schools surrendered their VA status for VC status to free the parishes from any serious financial commitments to the schools. Table 2:1 below summarises the characteristics of the two types of church schools allowed by the Act. However, Dearing’s Report (2001) recommended that the Church of England built more VA schools (See Chapter Five). The RC Church policy to maintain VA status for all of its schools and the Church of England’s decision to expand capacity in their VA schools raised the crucial question of the nature of church schools in modern English society. The task of the next section is to explore the question of the nature of church schools in today’s England.

**Table 2:1**

**Characteristics of Voluntary Aided and Controlled schools**

Voluntary Aided	Controlled
The school is owned by trustees as part of a church educational trust.	The school is owned by trustees as part of a church educational trust.
The foundation governors are in the majority on the governing body.	The foundation governors are in a minority on the governing body.
The staff are employed by the governors who may seek evidence of Christian commitment from applicants.	The staff are employed by the local authority.
The governors are responsible for the external maintenance of the building, with the exception of the school kitchen areas, and for funding improvements to it.	The local authority is responsible for the external maintenance of the building and for funding improvements to it.
Religious education is taught in accordance with the provisions of the trust deed, unless parents request teaching in accordance with the Agreed Syllabus and there is no other convenient school which the children can attend where this is offered.	Religious education is taught in accordance with the local authority's Agreed Syllabus; religious education in accordance with the Trust deed may be provided if parents request it for their children.
Worship is conducted according to the provisions of the Trust deed.	Worship is conducted according to the locally agreed syllabus.
The governors are responsible for admissions to the school.	The local authority is responsible for admissions to the school.

**(Source: Murphy, 1971, pp. 224-225)**

## **2.7 What is a church school?**

Rogers (1981, p. 27) provided the clearest indication of the nature of a church school as he wrote:

Around a third of all State schools [in England] are run in part by religious bodies. These are in the main voluntary schools. Two thirds of those schools are Church of England - the rest are Roman Catholic, Jewish or Methodist. Of every five children, one is being taught in a denominational or Church school.

From the perspective of Rogers, a church school was virtually synonymous with a church VA school. O'Keeffe (1986) inadvertently or otherwise took forward the debate on the nature of a church school by selecting schools with VA status as 'church schools.' She wrote:

At this stage of selecting the sample, a decision had to be made concerning the choice of Church of England voluntary-aided secondary school (p. 3).

She also used the terms 'church schools' and 'church schools with voluntary-aided statuses' interchangeably. For example she wrote:

Furthermore, the intention of extending the project was not to survey all Church of England voluntary-aided schools.... This is not to infer homogeneity of experience shared by Church schools in London (p.3).

Grace (2002, p. 3) equally referred to RC voluntary-aided schools as RC schools as is evident in the following quotation:

The Roman Catholic secondary schools in London, Liverpool and Birmingham...are not private schools. Their formal status in England is that of 'voluntary-aided schools,' which means in practice that they are non-fee paying institutions and an integrated part of the free secondary education system (p. xii).

McLaughlin (1987, p. 69) clarified the nature of a church or a religious school in the following terms:

- it provided a full-time general education for its pupils
- it provided education in an institutional context in which the truth of the Christian faith was presupposed and taught
- it sought to develop in its pupils the understanding and commitment which are characteristics of an 'educated person' and of a 'religious person'.



The implication was that church schools had a voluntary-aided status and exhibited certain unique values based on Christian beliefs and practices, and in these respects were distinctive from LEA schools. In the light of the above discussion, the following distinguishing features constitute the working definition of a church school in this study. A church school is an institution:

- which bears the name of a particular denomination
- with a voluntary-aided status (see Table 2:1)
- run by a named denomination
- which is an integral part of the mainstream school system in England
- undertakes the activities of good education in a Christian context
- combines general education and Christian nurture with a view to Christian commitment.

This excludes privately-funded or independent schools with a denominational or religious foundation. It also excludes other voluntary-aided mainstream schools run by organisations other than churches. Various forms of ‘supplementary’ schools (Sunday or evening) organised by some churches to provide an extra religious instruction or a specific educational need and LEA schools are also excluded.

## **2.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has identified the vision underlying the involvement of churches in the English education system as providing a platform for the development of social, moral and spiritual mobility among young people of diverse social backgrounds within English society (Curtis, 1966). This vision comprises the teaching of the Christian faith as true, and the providing of opportunity for pupils to consider becoming a part of it. The church schools therefore educate people to acknowledge

their God-given skills, talents and gifts to better themselves, their fellow human beings, and the world around them. This view of church schools raises the question of their relevance in today's English society, in which a market economy dominates all aspects of life. The task for the next chapter is to explore the extent to which the perceived nature of education in the nineteenth century is compatible with a liberal philosophy of education in contemporary English society perceived as secular. In other words, what is the role of church schools in modern English society?

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **A REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE**

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews published literature concerning the question of church schools' compatibility with a liberal educational philosophy and their (church schools) relevance in a pluralist society. It explores the assumption that Christian involvement in education undermines individual autonomy and must therefore be discouraged. It also explores the assertion that the process of secularisation has rendered Christianity irrelevant in people's lives; and that individual autonomy outweighs any religious or cultural interest that may exist for educating a child at a school that subscribes to a particular religious world view. Thus religion hinders individual autonomy, and should have no place in an education system in a secular society. However, this chapter takes the view that church schools *are* compatible with liberal education theory for the following reasons: (i) the church schools provide pupils with skills to investigate Christian faith, and provide an opportunity either to subscribe to or to reject Christian commitment; (ii) the theology of Christian education is self-critical and evolves with time and experience; (iii) the church schools are committed to independent public assessment of their teaching and learning processes or methodologies in the form of Ofsted inspections; and (iv) the church schools are adaptable in relation to the constraints of the market economy within the English educational system. The next section examines the process of secularisation, and whether it renders church schools incompatible with liberal education in detail.

### **3.2 Secularisation**

The process of secularisation means different things to different people. For example, some people perceive the process as the liberation of humanity from the myth and obscurantism of religious domination to a true form of human enlightenment in which reason occupies the place formerly assigned to God. For others, secularisation represents a crucial loss of the sense of transcendence in human existence and with it the sense of ultimate meaning and purpose for humanity (Grace, 2002). Common to the two schools of thought is the dethronement or exclusion of the transcendent or God from everyday human activities. The doubts about the nature of the process initiated a wide cultural and intellectual debate in the 1960s regarding whether personal autonomy was achievable without God. Smith (1970) argued that ‘the tides of secular thought and life had swept away the familiar landmarks of moral standards and traditional belief’ in England.’ Thus the factors that informed public morality or an acceptable moral standard in England had shifted from religious ideals to those of secularism. Short (1971, p. 49) wrote:

The humanist and agnostic believe [he] can live a perfectly good life without Christian belief - and of course, they are right.

He effectively identified human beings as essentially spiritual with an inborn or an inherent desire to live in accordance with a certain standard, irrespective of who or what determined the criteria for such a standard. The attempt to exclude religion from the achievement of individual autonomy is a declaration that self-sufficiency is the norm in a secular society rather than an exhibition of a faith in an external being, as was expressed by Short in the terms below:

... today the idea of a code - providing for most people a groundwork of rules - has well-nigh been replaced by the individual person using his own reason to decide what is right and wrong (ibid., 1971, p. 52).

White (1995, pp. 8-9) endorsed this view when he wrote thus:

Collectively, we are not given ethical direction by forces outside ourselves, whether these are natural or transcendental; we have worked this out over millennia from our own resources.

Wilson (1966) referred to 'the process through which religious thinking, practice and institutions lose their social significance' as the process of secularisation. However, it is noteworthy that Wilson referred to the loss of social rather than spiritual significance, which raises the question of whether the two are identifiable. The inborn desire in human persons to be spiritual is fundamental to every aspect, including the social aspect, of human life (Section 6.6.3). Wilson (1977) identified the apparent loss of religious influence in England with what he saw as the irrelevance of the churches' message to the majority of the population. He wrote:

The content of the message that the Church seeks to promote, the attitudes and values that it tries to encourage, no longer inform much of our national life (New Society, 1977).

Wilson used a survey conducted in both the USA and the UK to support his claim that the message of the church had ceased to inform attitudes and values in both countries. He wrote:

According to recent public opinion polls in both Britain and the United States, the vast majority of people in both countries believe that religion is losing its influence in their way of life. There is a decline, too, in the percentage of those who believe in God and - although the absolute figures for the two countries remain very different - there is a decline in Church membership and attendance in each (The Times, 13 October 1973).

Such a claim raises a number of issues worth further consideration. First, the interchangeable use of 'church' and 'religion' paints a misleading picture of the innate spirituality of human beings. Wilson starts with religion losing its influence on social life, decline in belief in God, and then mentions the decline in church membership and attendance. The question arising from such a perspective is whether church and religion are not two separate entities. In other words, the understanding of the relationship of identity between church and religion is crucial to the validity, or for the assessment, of the process of secularisation. Glasner (1977, p. 7) explained it in the following terms:

The assumption is that, since a common usage definition of Christianity for example, is concerned with church attendance, membership and presence at rites of passage, these constitute significant elements of a definition of religion, and that any move away from this institutional participation involves religious decline.

The common assumption that regular participation in church rituals determines the significance of religion in people's lives and the wider society undermines the nature of Christianity. It is more than a mere participation in different rituals, however important that may be. Christianity is about a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is a personal response to the quest for truth, which is Jesus Christ - 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life...' (John 14:6). It is also a particular perception

of God, the world, history and humanity. To this end, secularisation is a denial of the truth or freedom found in the Son of God, Jesus Christ - 'And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free' (John 8:32). Grace (2002) made the valid point that secularisation represented the denial of the validity of the sacred and of its associated culture. Such a denial was an attempt to replace the sacred with logical, rational, empirical and scientific intellectual cultures in which the notion of the transcendent (God) had no place. However, for such an attempt to be successful required a significant cultural change in a society as Berger (1973, p. 113) noted:

By secularization we mean the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols...Secularization manifests itself in the evacuation by the Christian churches of areas previously under their control and influence.

Thus both secularisation and religion (Christianity) cannot co-exist because they are mutually exclusive. For example, the process of secularisation fills a vacuum left by religion or the perceived irrelevance of the church message. Based on this, the influence of Christianity on English culture in terms of its laws and value-system would need to be removed for the values of secularism to be effective. Furthermore, the concept of a transcendent or divine being (God) would have to give way to different world views such as Marxism. Marx, for example, argued that God was simply a projection of human concerns or an illusion (Section 6.6.3). This suggests that embracing the process of secularisation involves a shift in a world view to the extent that religious concepts, religious discourse and religious sensitivities simply become irrelevant to the business of everyday life. While it was possible that religion had been relegated to the bottom of the scale of preference or priority in



contemporary English society, the claim of irrelevance of religious interpretations in the lives of individuals was highly questionable. The absence of religion leaves the innate spiritual desire in human beings unfulfilled. Despite the fact that there was a decline in church membership and attendance in the institutional church in England,<sup>15</sup> its associated institutions such as church schools were popular and over subscribed. Besides, 72% of the English population, according to the National Census in 2001, considered themselves Christians which raised the obvious question of the reason for the continued decline in church membership and attendance. There could be several reasons for the majority of the English population's claim to the Christians faith even though they would not attend church services or acts of worship. For example: (i) the relationship between the State and the CoE could have led the population to believe that they lived in a Christian nation which by implication made them Christians (ii) the CoE played a vital role in the life of the nation such as coronation of the sovereign (Head of State) and national religious activities. Moreover, religion is not synonymous with Christianity and the decline in church attendance or membership is not necessarily reflective of other religious faiths represented in England. For example, the 2001 Census also identified 13% of the population as associated with religions other than Christianity in Britain. This underlined the fact that the great majority of English people considered themselves religious as opposed to 15% who claimed to have no religious affiliation. This confirms the innate desire of humanity to relate to a Supreme Being such as God for their spiritual satisfaction which raised the question of the reason for the decline in church membership and attendance. The

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<sup>15</sup> The English Church Census shows a 15% decline of church attendance, from 3,714,700 to 3,166,200 (see: <http://www.eauk.org/resources/info/statistics/2005englishchurchcensus.cfm#census>)

challenge for Christianity is to discover the underlying factors or reasons for people changed attitude towards church membership and attendance in modern English society, together with ways to challenge those changed attitudes. Berger assumed that Protestantism had inadvertently embraced secularisation because of its historical reduction of the use of sacred symbolism in its religious practice. The issues raised from such a view are: (i) whether decline in church membership relates to reduced symbolism; and (ii) whether worshippers feel dissatisfied with reduced symbolism in worship. Such a view underestimates Protestant Christians' ability to think abstractly or to exercise faith. Berger, on the other hand, suggests that Roman Catholicism is a stronger adversary of secularisation because of its regular employment of symbolism in its worship. He wrote:

The Roman Catholic lives in a world in which the sacred is mediated to him through a variety of channels...the sacraments of the church, the intercession of the saints, the recurring eruption of the 'supernatural' in miracles ... a vast continuity of being between the seen and the unseen (1973, p.117).

There is evidence in the Bible to suggest the effectiveness of symbolism in mediating the presence of God (worship). The Bible explains the concept of God's holiness or presence in terms of 'separateness' or 'remoteness' in which symbolism plays a major role in conveying this to worshippers. The book of Exodus (19:16-25) describes the presence of the holiness of God as in thunder, lightning, volcanic eruption and a blaring trumpet, followed by a dire warning of death to onlookers. Uzzah discovered the effectiveness of this symbolism when he 'tried to steady the ark of God (the symbol for God's presence) as the oxen stumbled' and was struck dead (II Samuel

6:6-9). Such an incident could either warn people away from a closer relationship with God or highlight the closeness of God to people through symbolism. However, the symbolism suggests that the fuller understanding of the holiness (separateness and remoteness) of God is in His moral character rather than in physical or ceremonial terms (Stacey, 1977). In this sense, Berger's assertion that lack of symbolism enhances the process of secularisation is an attempt to replace the moral understanding of God's sacredness with symbolism. Berger's explanation for the change in attitude towards religion (e.g. Christianity) fails to provide an acceptable reason for the supposed shift from Christian ideals to those of secularism. This suggests that the underlying cause of secularisation is deeper than the apparent irrelevance of the Christian message to contemporary English society (Section 6:3:1). While symbolism has a role in Christianity, Berger's claim raises more questions than answers for counteracting the process of secularisation. First, Berger's insistence on symbolism undermines an act of faith in relation to entering and appreciating the presence of God. Second, Berger does not provide criteria for the assessment of sacredness in terms of symbolism. For example, there is no framework or criterion to determine the difference between symbolism and idol worship. There is a fine line between, on the one hand, the use of a Christian symbol to focus the worshipper's mind on God, and, on the other, identifying the symbol as a god to which worship is directed. Similarly, there is no empirical evidence to reinforce the suggestion that Roman Catholicism, through the use of religious symbols, averts the process of secularisation. Nonetheless, White (1995) argued for the exclusion of religious interference in public institutions such as schools. He asserted that schools could find

in aesthetic education a powerful alternative to religious education which would enhance the role of philosophy of education 'in illuminating the place of a non-religious... cosmic framework in the education of our children' (pp. 18-19). White effectively argued for the need to identify a meaningful framework to satisfy the innate human spiritual desire in a secular education and to 'abandon all notions of other-worldly felicity' (pp. 4-5). The implication is that, for White, a religious framework had no place in education, but other areas such as the arts could satisfy humanity's spiritual cravings. Effectively, church schools were accused of failing to provide the education envisaged or perceived by White as compatible with the education necessary for modern English society. The underlying assumption of such a viewpoint is that church schools undermine liberal education theory and practice. The assumption raises two significant questions: what is the nature of liberal education and do schools with no religious framework deliver such an education?

### **3.3 Liberal education**

Liberal education gives a broad perspective of the world in order to enable pupils to realise their full potential and to have the capacity to make intelligent choices in the light of broadened horizons. Alternatively, it is liberation from the limitations of the 'present and particular' to 'the development of the rational mind... simply because nothing else could be so liberating, fundamental or general' (Bailey, 1984 p. 20).

Hobson & Edwards (1999, p. 3) also advocated that liberal education:

Involves a commitment to what is intrinsically worthwhile, to knowledge which has breadth or cognitive perspective, and to forms of education which are neither limited in their scope nor questionable in their methods.

This implies that liberal education involves the development of reason or promotion of rationality. Such an education enables the exhibition of values such as individuality, freedom, autonomy, rationality and tolerance. This makes liberal education a means for pupils to make their own reasoned decisions about what might, for them, constitute the good life. Such an understanding suggests that liberally-educated persons are self-governed and that their thoughts and actions are empirically based. Thus such people have the ability to interrogate the world around them; lack of this ability indicates that they have been either illiberally educated or have received little education at all. The question for liberal education is whether liberally educated-persons exhibit particular values or merely follow a particular pattern. To argue for pupils to think in a certain or a particular way could imply either coercion or indoctrination,<sup>16</sup> of which liberal education could also be accused if to be liberally-educated means behaving in a particular fashion. In order to avoid such an accusation, liberal education has to allow full independence of thought and choice to include a confrontation with arguments based on both empirical evidence and religious faith. Failure to include arguments based on religious faith amounts to restrictive choice which undermines any liberal theory of independent thought or freedom to respond in favour of religious faith. Unless liberal theorists produce empirical evidence to suggest that arguments based on religious faith remove pupils' independence, there can be no justification for the view that church schools are unable to provide liberal education. The question, therefore, is the extent to which church schools' education is compatible with liberal education. Professor Paul Hirst (1974, 1976, and 1994) questioned church schools' ability to make a distinctive contribution to educational

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<sup>16</sup> See Section 3.4 for discussion on indoctrination and a church school education.

practice. The underlying assumption made by Hirst was that religion and liberal education were incompatible. Hirst argued that ‘there has now emerged in our society a concept of education which makes the whole idea of Christian education a kind of nonsense’ (1974, p. 77). At the heart of this newly-emerged concept of education was the idea of individual autonomy. Hirst distinguished between a ‘primitive’ and a ‘sophisticated’ concept of education. He argued that a ‘primitive’ education was concerned with an uncritical passing on of customs and beliefs of a ‘primitive tribe’ to children in the belief that they would come to believe it as true. There is nothing controversial about passing on a ‘primitive belief’ to be believed as true, especially as Hirst failed to provide criteria for the recognition of an uncritical belief. Unless, of course, Hirst referred to, or described, the imposition of beliefs upon pupils without a scope for a voluntary response or rejection, it was impossible for him to justify his conclusion. On the other hand, if he referred to imposition of beliefs on individuals or groups, such a practice is not only unacceptable in a liberal democratic society but is also unacceptable in the Christian theology.<sup>17</sup> The problem for Hirst, however, was that he had identified Christianity with a ‘primitive tribe’ which supposedly passed on uncritical customs and beliefs to pupils as true. While he fell short of accusing Christian education of indoctrination, the implication was nevertheless obvious. Based on this, he excluded Christianity from participating in the sophisticated concept of education. The sophisticated concept of education, Hirst argued, was concerned with an objective knowledge, truth and reason, and with setting out, for pupils, methods and procedures of various disciplines according to public criteria - i.e.

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<sup>17</sup> The question of the relationship between Christian faith and indoctrination is explored in detail in Section 3:4.

publicly-acknowledged rational principles. In other words, the criteria for the search of knowledge and understanding excluded religion as a means of knowledge acquisition because it (religion) undermined the autonomy of education and of the person. Hirst selected mathematics, engineering and farming to explain the autonomy of education as follows:

In mathematics, engineering or farming we have developed activities in which what is right or wrong or good or bad of its kind is determined by rational principles which make the activity what it is.

The selected areas of discourse had acquired an autonomy based on rational principles, and education had acquired ‘an exactly similar status’ (1974, p. 68). Based on this illustration, Hirst insisted that there could not be a ‘characteristically or distinctively Christian form of education,’ any more than a distinctively Christian form of mathematics, as expressed in the terms below:

Just as intelligent Christians have come to recognise that justifiable scientific claims are autonomous and do not, and logically cannot, rest on religious beliefs, so also, it seems to me, justifiable educational principles are autonomous. That is to say, that any attempt to justify educational principles by an appeal to religious claims is invalid (1976, pp 155-7).

Hirst was correct to assert that there was no such thing as a ‘distinctively Christian form of mathematics’, but he was wrong to set it against a Christian form of, or involvement in, education. While there is not a specially designated Christian mathematical formula, Hirst failed to grasp that Christian education is about the environment, process and purpose of teaching and learning from a particular subject (See Chapter Six). Another problem for Hirst was that he committed one of the worst

or most serious mistakes which advocates of liberal education could make; failing to base his reasons for excluding Christianity from sophisticated education on empirical evidence. On the contrary, there is theological evidence to suggest that Christianity is quite capable of participating in Hirst's 'sophisticated' education. The Christian faith advocates rationality, individuality, choice and accountability, which are some of the salient values of liberal education (Thiessen, 1992). For example, Christians are called to exercise their minds, consider all possible or available options and either respond to or reject God's extended love to humanity (Matthew 22:37). The individual who chooses to respond maintains certain values, dignity and worth given by God, and thus becomes distinctive (Genesis 1; Psalm 8, 139). The individual has a choice, and is therefore subject to future accountability to God (Ezekiel 3; Matthew 16: 24-28). The choice gives every person the right to refuse (Luke 9:5) or to accept the given values. While the emphasis is on individual choice, Christianity also recognises the value of community (Exodus 29:45), mutual interdependence (1 Corinthians 12:27) and the legitimacy of traditions. This means that individual choice, in Christianity, includes an acceptance of being part of a Christian community immersed in a particular tradition. It was therefore not surprising for Hirst to concede that the two concepts of education (primitive and sophisticated) rested upon a 'distinctive view of the foundation of knowledge and belief' (1974, pp. 79 & 89; 1985, p. 6). However, Hirst argued against the integration of the two concepts. The argument against integration of faith and personal autonomy puts religion against liberal education by making them 'either one or the other.' This effectively amounts to coercion, because Hirst undermined the apparent individual choice afforded by



liberal education by insisting on the selection of personal autonomy in the form of sophisticated education as opposed to primitive education, which, according to him, included the endeavours of religion. Hirst explicitly removed from individual pupils the very autonomy that, according to him, religion undermined. By excluding church schooling, he failed to afford an opportunity for individuals to exercise their independent choice, and thus undermined his claim that his conception of liberal education offered genuine choice. In the absence of a genuine choice between faith (primitive education) and rational autonomy (sophisticated education), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Hirst had an ulterior motive, which, according to Grace (2002), was to eliminate religion from education. Grace puts it thus: 'Hirst's prime target is religious ideology in education' (p. 13). Hirst certainly seemed to be utterly opposed to the place of religion in education. This was because church schools were, he argued, 'inconsistent with the principles that should govern an open, critical, rational and religiously pluralistic society' (Hirst, 1985, p. 15). However, given, according to Hirst, the characteristics of the principles that govern autonomy (rationality, critical openness and so forth) and the nature of the Christian faith, he was wrong to make that assertion. Christianity, by nature, is curious about the unknown – the desire to know more about God and His creation - which in the final analysis is the motivational force for the religiously educated person's quest for the truth. This renders the claim or suggestion that Christian education is restrictive and illiberal baseless, since it helps pupils to identify, appreciate and critically relate to the culture and values of the society in which they live. McLaughlin, however, took a

different view from that of Hirst by arguing that Christian education sought a greater integration of faith and rational autonomy. He wrote:

[Christians'] long-term, or ultimate, aim is to place their children in a position where they can autonomously choose to accept or reject their religious faith - or religious faith in general. Since, however, these parents have decided to approach the development of the child's autonomy in religion through exposing them to their own particular religious faith, their short-term aim is the development of faith; albeit a faith which is not closed off from future revision or rejection (McLaughlin, 1984, p. 79).

McLaughlin effectively identified two issues for parents, irrespective of their religious beliefs: (i) to determine the nature of their primary culture (religious or secular initiation), which is the first phase of liberal education; and (ii) to transmit certain information unique to a particular religious faith, such as Christianity, which is essential to growth towards rational autonomy. The identified issues are consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1966) insistence that some form of initiation or transmission was crucial for a person's mental development throughout life. Christian parents, like any other parents, commit their children to church schools in the 'hope that their child's eventual autonomy will be exercised in favour of faith but...this...remains a hope rather than a requirement' (McLaughlin, 1984, p. 79). Thus there is no coercion involved in Christian nurture or development which eventually provides pupils with an independent choice. McLaughlin (1992) therefore argued for parents' right to shape the early education of their children in relation to their own beliefs, values, principles and ideologies in a democratic pluralist society. However, there appears to be a perception that unless a pupil speaks unfavourably of, or explicitly rejects, religious beliefs, that pupil is not autonomous and liberally

educated. Gardner (1988, p. 96), for example, argued that for a child to be autonomous, parents needed to refrain from providing ‘an upbringing which inculcates a particular set of religious beliefs.’ Gardner made an unjustified assumption that a secular upbringing or education enabled a child to be autonomous. He also demanded that religious parents either concealed their faith from the child or encouraged the child to be a secularist in thought until that child was sufficiently old enough to make an independent choice for or against religion. Gardner, however, failed to produce any empirical evidence to support the view that the absence of religious beliefs enabled pupils to be more open, rational and critical. Neither was there any empirical evidence to suggest that the presence of religious belief enabled pupils to be less autonomous. White also saw parents’ rights and the protection of children’s rights as incompatible, as expressed in the terms below:

If the parent has an obligation to bring up his child as a morally autonomous person, he cannot at the same time have the right to indoctrinate him with any beliefs whatsoever, since some beliefs may contradict those on which his educational endeavours should be based (White, 1982, p. 266).

White assumed that the introduction of a child into a belief system amounted to indoctrination; this assumption is discussed later in Section 3.5 of this Chapter. Such an assumption means that, for example, if Christian parents raised their child in a Christian environment, it amounted to a denial of an opportunity for the child to become autonomous. Callan (1985, p. 117) puts it thus: ‘parents who rear their children within a particular religion incur a significant risk of indoctrinating them.’ Deakin (1989a) disputed such a claim, and argued in the following terms:

All human beings and all schools have a faith position, whether it is clothed in religious language or not, which embraces all those values which are held to be important in life and determines our whole perspective on reality (p. 7)<sup>18</sup>.

Hirst, however, conceded that a family's religious beliefs might be compatible with education, except that they were not what education was about (1974, p. 90). The implication is that education, from Hirst's perspective, rejects the possibility of attaining personal autonomy through faith. Grace (2002, pp. 23-24), therefore, took issue with Hirst in defence of autonomy within a church-school education:

He [Hirst] fails to recognise that there has not been, and in human society cannot be, a school or an educational experience which is entirely autonomous, objective, neutral and ideologically free.

Grace (ibid.) argued that all schools in Europe (UK included) promulgated ideology, though the ideology might not be that of Christianity. He (ibid.) then made an important point that:

Secularisation has its own assumptions about the human person, the ideal society, and the ideal system of schooling and the meaning of human existence. While these assumptions may not be formally codified into a curriculum subject designated 'secular education' as an alternative to 'religious education', they characteristically permeate the ethos and culture of the state-provided secular schools and form a crucial part of the 'hidden curriculum.

This implies that different ideologies and faiths have their underlined assumptions or values that inform their perspectives on education. Thus education is not as

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<sup>18</sup> McLaughlin also took the view that 'Education cannot be value-free. Every action (and every omission) of a teacher is value-laden and so is every aspect of the ethos and organization of the school' (2000, p. 209).

ideologically neutral as has been suggested by writers such as Hirst and White. The emerging question, therefore, is whether indoctrination is compatible with education in church schools.

### **3.4 Education in church schools and indoctrination**

Thiessen (1992, p. 67) referred to the term ‘indoctrination’ as a type of teaching that is ‘somehow incompatible with true education’ (liberal education), which critics have associated with education in church schools. However, the above discussions have indicated that education in church schools combines Christian nurture and rational autonomy. The question then arises as to whether there are workable criteria by which to determine whether or not currently employed teaching methods in church schools are incompatible with liberal education philosophy. There is a consensus on four broad criteria – content, method, aim of teaching, and consequence of teaching - deemed to be essential for assessing whether a church-school education involves indoctrination. The first criterion, content, relates to the subject-matter of a particular course. Critics of church schools have supposed that the teaching on offer at such places is inevitably unfairly distorted because it is seen as a way of passing on essential Christian beliefs or doctrines to both children and adults who are new to the faith. It was therefore not surprising that Kazipedes (1987) maintained that ‘the paradigm cases of indoctrination are to be found in religious communities and institutions’. In the Christian tradition, doctrines are used to describe what Christians believe about particular aspects of their faith, for example, the doctrine of God, human nature, salvation, and so on. Based on this, critics argue that Christian teachers

are more prone to indulge in indoctrination than their non-Christian counterparts. Such a view assumes that the issue of indoctrination arises in areas concerning such matters as the existence or non-existence of God, the nature of humanity, standards of morality, and so on. For example, Peters (1966) asserted that ‘whatever else ‘indoctrination’ means, it obviously has something to do with doctrines.’ Similarly, Flew (1972) asserted that ‘no doctrines, no indoctrination.’ These assertions raised the question of the nature of doctrine which basically means ‘teaching’ or instruction and implies that any educational process with teaching involved is liable to be a medium for indoctrination. However, there is a view that mathematics and the sciences cannot be liable to be a medium for indoctrination, because their subject matter is in general and in principle incontrovertibly verifiable by all. This view raises the question of whether pupils who are new to these subjects are able to verify the principles involved at an early stage of learning the principles of the subjects. It is reasonable to suppose that the principles of such subjects are initially imposed on pupils at the initial stage of their learning hoping that as they mature in the subjects they would be able to verify the principles involved and either to accept or reject them. This suggests that the liberal education model of pupils learning by the free use of their own reason on evidence presented to them without bias is unlikely to be free from indoctrination. This ideal model itself depends on presuppositions about the value of liberal educational methods which are imposed without argument despite being disputable. The point here is that the teaching of every subject, including mathematics and the sciences, is likely to impose some basic assumptions on pupils for their learning to start. Thus some degree of indoctrination is inevitable in the

educative process for learning to take place. The second of the above criteria relates to a particular teaching method employed to communicate a specific doctrine. Peshkin (1986), for example, regarded a teaching method that did not admit discussions among pupils on the subject matter, or that did not provide reasons for certain statements or formulae, as amounting to an imposition of certain perspectives on pupils. Kazipedes (1987) described such a method in the terms below:

The indoctrinator, because he is including doctrines, must resort to some educationally questionable methods such as failing to provide relevant evidence and argument or misapplying them, misusing his authority... (p. 233).

While such a teaching method may undermine pupils' ability to exercise their independent choice for or against a particular doctrine, there was a question of whether such teaching methods were not sometimes necessary for teaching and learning in different subjects beside RE. Mitchell (1970, p. 353) explained this in the following terms:

No one can always produce sufficient reasons for every statement he gets others to believe: (a) because they cannot always understand the reasons; (b) because he does not always know the reasons; he himself accepts a good deal on authority; (c) because life is too short.

This may explain why McLaughlin (1984), for example, argued that Christian parents hoped that their child would eventually use his or her autonomy to choose faith, indicating that church schools provided children with the essential facts about the Christian faith and offered them with a choice, rather than imposing particular doctrines upon them (p. 79). The third criterion deals with the teacher's intention in

using a selected teaching method for a particular doctrine or subject. Snook, for instance, suggested that a teacher was engaged in indoctrination if the aim of the teaching was to manipulate or impose on pupils' acceptance of the content of the teaching without any evidence. He put it thus: '... [a teacher] teaches with the intention that a pupil or pupils believe what is taught regardless of the evidence.' Mitchell also put it thus: 'the teacher produces in its pupils an unalterable conviction that  $2 + 2 = 4$ .' While this mathematical equation is verifiable, it has to be taught to primary schools children as a fact until such time as they are able to verify the mathematical principles involved for themselves. This kind of teaching produces pupils with closed minds or achieves conformity and resists divergence at the initial stage confirming that all subjects and forms of teaching are vulnerable to indoctrination. This suggests that to use an argument based on indoctrination to undermine church schools' participation in liberal education is unsustainable. The fourth criterion develops the third and considers the consequence of the teaching in that it offers pupils little or no choice. This implies that a particular teaching content may be designed to coerce pupils to believe certain doctrines without an opportunity to consider alternatives. Any institution or organisation involved in this teaching style or method is likely to produce pupils having closed minds. Such pupils are unable to exercise their independent choice, which undermines their development as rational autonomous persons. Based on this, it is reasonable to conclude that indoctrination imposes perspectives and values on pupils without:

- their understanding why they should accept them
- an opportunity to consider other alternatives
- the possibility of freely given assent



Even if this is an adequate definition, the original question remains: to what extent are church schools guilty of indoctrinating their pupils? From the basic understanding of indoctrination, as discussed above, it is clear that it is incompatible with the Christian faith itself and *ipso facto* with its institutions such as schools, on the grounds that Christian faith is essentially about believing in the freedom of the individual. The evangelical Christian faith, for example:

- requires an individual repentance, which is a matter of conscience, will and heart leading to a belief in Christ
- maintains that belief in Christ is an inner, personal conviction rooted in the choice of living in relation to the Gospel values
- holds that the genuineness of the individual's belief in Christ stems from the very voluntary nature of individual responses.

The implication is that the very nature of Christian faith prohibits the imposition on, or coercion of, individuals to believe in Christ. In other words, indoctrination is illegitimate in the Christian way of life. It has already been argued above that Christian faith advocates rational autonomy, which implies presenting individuals with the facts about the necessity of belief in Christ, whilst leaving each individual to exercise an independent choice for or against commitment to Christ. The research method used for this study (Section 5.8) made it difficult to ascertain the extent to which this evangelical belief was adhered to in church schools. However, it was unfair for Hirst (1974) and White (1982) to maintain that a church school education was indoctrinatory. It is also clear that Hirst and White were arbitrarily determined to take religion (faith) out of education, ignoring the ability of church schools to provide liberal education. Another important reason for church schools' compatibility with

liberal education is that their underlying theology is dynamic and has the ability to generate self-criticism.

### **3.5 Church school education and self-critique**

The dominance of science and technology in the 1960s English culture aroused a degree of cynicism among young people regarding the contribution of religious education in their lives (Ramsey, 1970). Religion was treated as if it were neither true nor false. More seriously, it appeared to be irrelevant to the lives of both adults and pupils because, presumably, it was not meeting their expectations. This deeply, and rightly so, affected the way religious belief, especially the Christian faith, was perceived in experience or practice. Religious people have been known, especially in the OT, to be frustrated with God's apparent indifference to their problems or sufferings (Psalm 10:1, 13:1-2, 22:1-2). So it was possible that the prevailing environment in the 1960s sowed a seed of doubt about religious or Christian faith which led to a theological upheaval culminating in the publication of books and research studies challenging the *status quo* – the way religious beliefs were viewed and communicated (Ramsey, 1970). The paragraphs that follow review some critical papers, books and research studies published in the 1960s concerning Christian belief and their implications for the teaching of RE. First, a collection of essays published by a group of Cambridge theologians in 1962 posed questions about Christian doctrine and ethics, New Testament studies, and the philosophy of religion. Second, the publication of John Robinson's book 'Honest to God' (1963) questioned the traditional ways of speaking and thinking about the nature of God. The book

encouraged adults in the general population to think about Christian beliefs in a more responsible and more contemporary way than hitherto - in relation to science, technology and an individual's perception of life. Robinson's publication stimulated a number of similar publications that questioned many of the accepted Christian beliefs regarding social responsibility and morality. The fact of the matter was that questions that were previously debated among scholars were suddenly being discussed in the press and media – front-room (Ramsey, 1970). This 'new' way or approach of thinking and talking about God served to remove any inhibitions that both Christians and non-Christians might have had in questioning the traditional Christian beliefs that had informed their perception of God, humanity and creation. These new perceptions of God also redefined the nature of religious education (RE), its contents and teaching methodology. Parents and pupils became sufficiently aware of the New Theology and the New Morality to the point where there were huge implications for religious education in schools. For example: (i) it cast doubt on some of the traditional theological formulations; and (ii) it encouraged a person-centred approach to the search for meaning and truth. This eventually affected teachers and teaching of the whole concept of religion and its relevance to human life, especially young people. This search to make religion relevant to young people led to a number of research studies in relation to the teaching and communication of religious ideas, to which the discussion now turns.

Loukes (1961) published the first of the empirical research studies, 'Teenage Religion', to challenge the way religious education had been taught to young people,

specifically teenagers. He highlighted the problem of communicating RE to fifteen-year-olds, arguing that they often left school ignorant and confused about Biblical stories even though they had great interest in the subject. He challenged the existing teaching method of Bible-centred approach and advocated a problem-centred approach. This approach was based on discussion of a wide range of spiritual, political and moral problems in the light of an individual's insight and experience. It provided an opportunity for peer discussion about things that mattered to them at their own level of Christian experience with a teacher's input. Ronald Goldman (1964) also used the conclusion of his research to contribute to discussions about the problem of the methodology of teaching religious concepts to young people. Goldman's main conclusions were as follows:

- Children under the age of thirteen were not capable of the abstract thinking necessary for understanding theological concepts
- The content of RE in primary schools was overloaded or, as he put it, it was 'an impossible task to teach the Bible to children before adolescence'.

Goldman's main concern was for RE in primary schools to prepare pupils for RE in secondary school. He therefore recommended that RE in primary schools explored a series of themes based on childhood experiences such as 'our home', 'people who help us' and 'farm animals and the farmer'; which he expressed in the following terms:

Emphasis should be upon exploring and clarifying those experiences, which later religious understanding and story will illumine, because the experience that forms it has been known and encountered with understanding (ibid, p.232-233).

Failure to do that, he argued, would lead to misconceptions among young people which would eventually affect their attitude to both religion and RE in future years. Loukes' used his second publication; 'New Ground in Christian Education' (1965), to confirm that teaching methodology was the main cause of the inability of young pupils to understand and to retain Biblical concepts and material. He also identified the disconnection between home and school as a contributory factor to the lack of parents and pupils appreciation of the subject. The apparent openness of theological debate in the media at the time could mean that Loukes' work was an attempt to take the debate forward in order to find new teaching methodologies for RE and its teaching in contemporary society. However, a series of research findings in the 1970s, such as Gates (1976) and Murphy (1979), refuted the earlier conclusions that children had difficulties in understanding and retaining Biblical concepts. These researchers argued to the contrary that children *were* able to think abstractly. While Goldman and others might have made a valid point about the need for good pedagogy, they failed to appreciate that a similar need existed in all curriculum subjects, including mathematics and science. Furthermore, they failed to produce evidence to show why children rejected religious material or to justify the claim that young people found religious concepts peculiarly hard to grasp. Goldman's research could have been an attempt to restrict or minimise the use of the Bible in religious education. Such an attempt would be consistent with his recommendation that very little Biblical material was suitable for primary schools. He expressed it thus:

The recommendation may have to be faced that very little Biblical material is suitable before Secondary Schooling (p. 225).

Similarly, Alves (1968) produced some evidence to suggest that young people attached importance to religious questions but that the continued short supply of RE specialists undermined their interest. The shortage of RE specialists has not changed from the 1960s, particularly Christian RE specialist teachers for church schools. Dearing commenting on the shortage of such teachers wrote:

Unless the Church can act successfully to find the teachers needed for the schools it already has, and for the increased provision recommended in our report, nothing will be achieved (2001, para. 6.2).

The debate about the appropriate teaching methodology and the most acceptable ways to communicate religious beliefs to young people still persists in the modern English education system. Despite the requirements of the law, RE varies a good deal from school to school, reflecting their particular type or status. Methodologies such as confessional, experiential, interpretative, multifaith, and open or educational (Hammond et al, 1990; Jackson, 1997) are used in different types of schools depending on their status. The confessional and open approaches appeared to be the two main types used in the maintained system of schools in England. The confessional approach related to church schools and had a role of inculcating and perpetuating a particular religious belief. The ‘open’ or ‘the educational’ approach, on the other hand, was used in LEA schools to inform rather than to inculcate and perpetuate a particular belief. However, the use of the two methodologies raises the question of their compatibility with the legal requirements of RE within the maintained system. The law requires RE to be taught with Christianity as the main religion in Britain. Unless there is an attempt to undermine the role of religion in the

English education system, the artificial dichotomy of confessional and open approaches is unsustainable. This is because the teaching of Christianity is both informative and practical, which makes it compatible with liberal education.

### **3.6 Church school education in the pluralistic English society**

The period between 1950 and 1970 witnessed the arrival of immigrants from the 'New Commonwealth' states.<sup>19</sup> Their arrival meant a large representation of different ethnic, cultural and religious groups in the maintained schooling system. Such a cultural, religious and ethnic mix challenged the social and religious structures of individual English schools (Wright, 1997). The challenge required a redefinition of the established religious, social and cultural norms within schools to accommodate the prevailing diversities. This raised the question of the appropriate education in a pluralist society and church schools' capability to contribute to such an education. The measurement of a school's capacity of delivering such an education is in the form of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) inspection. This is an external inspection seen as the driving force in terms of the evaluation of school and pupil performance. Its main function under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996 is to report on the following:

- the educational standards achieved in the school
- the quality of education provided by the school
- the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils at the school
- whether the financial resources made available to the school are managed efficiently

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<sup>19</sup> Immigrants from ex-colonies such as India, Pakistan, and the West Indies

The inspection reports of the church schools selected for this study are examined under Section 6.2.1. They show that most church schools provide a standard of education required set out by the Inspection Act confirming their capability to provide liberal education to their pupils. This means that church schools are also capable of education within a pluralist society such as England. Pluralism is the concept that different ingredients of a 'mixture' (different groups) are equally valid and acceptable in English society. Newbigin (1989) identified pluralism as a mixture of different religious or cultural groups with shared values in a particular community. He wrote:

It has become a commonplace to say that we live in a pluralist society - not merely a society which is in fact plural in the variety of cultures, religions, and lifestyles which it embraces, but pluralist in the sense that plurality is celebrated as things to be approved and cherished (p. 2).

However, as is expressed in the extract, pluralism is not just a description of different groups but how such groups should accommodate or relate to one another. Newbigin contributed to the understanding of pluralism by drawing a distinction between pluralism as a 'fact of life' (descriptive pluralism) and as an 'ideology' (prescriptive pluralism). Pluralism as a fact of life describes the plurality of cultures, religions, ethnic groups and life styles in a society that share a public life (1989, p. 2). This descriptive pluralism makes no judgement as to whether a particular state of affairs is good or bad (McGrath, 1996). For example, it merely notes that in a society there are different groups such as male and female, young and old, rich and poor, black and white and so on but provides no criteria for how different groups should mingle or interact. The absence of such criteria undermines descriptive pluralism's capacity to contribute to a tolerant society. This is because it fails to provide an environment for



interpersonal, inter-religious and inter-cultural relationships or for different groups to interact in a society. As regards pluralism as an ideology, McGrath (1996) argued that it sought to prescribe for different groups how they should behave and to achieve its goal of integration. Thus the ideology describes different observable entities in society as equally acceptable in a society because there is no public criterion for determining what is acceptable in a society. However, to accept different groups as of equal value in a society has broad social, religious, and cultural implications. For example, it could reduce the capacity of different groups to negotiate an understanding or a workable method of resolving problems in a pluralist society. McGrath (1996, p. 206), condemned this form of pluralism in the following terms:

This form of pluralism is strongly prescriptive, seeking to lay down what may be believed, rather than merely describe what is believed.

The implication is that, different groups could achieve social, religious and cultural integration in a society if there were publicly acceptable criteria for the adjudication of right and wrong. A marriage metaphor in this instance should help to explain the failure of prescriptive pluralism to promote social or community cohesion. A marriage relationship consists of two people, (often different not only in terms of gender but in terms of background, family, social status and in some cases culture, and so on), who choose to live together as a married couple. Marriage, with the exception of some ‘arranged marriages’, is not a coercive but an elective union. However, within such a relationship one partner might come to perceive the other as a wrong choice as the marriage progresses with the years. An underlying factor leading to such a conclusion is that the couple have become sufficiently close to notice the

extent of their differences in relation either to a specific or to a general outlook on life. For example, X and Y have been in a marriage relationship for a number of years. X feels unfairly treated in relation to Y's contribution to the relationship. X confronts Y about Y's contribution to the marriage. Y disagrees with X's assessment of Y's contribution to the relationship. Meanwhile, there is no established criterion within the relationship to assess the value of either X's or Y's contribution, which leaves X dissatisfied and inevitably leads to a split in the relationship. The problem is that prescriptive pluralism should allow a means for different groups to establish criteria for determining equality or inequality of status to facilitate grounds for negotiation among the groups. The established criteria should enable those involved in social relationships to admit wrongdoing, apologise and to take a given relationship to a higher level. Failure to establish such criteria could lead to broken relationships or social disintegration. Of course, the established criteria may not mend broken relationships or social disintegration of themselves, but they could create an environment for negotiation. Prescriptive pluralism therefore fails to guarantee social integration because it undermines the capacity of different groups in a society to acknowledge their positions as more or less acceptable in a society. The same principle is applicable to all human relationships, including those of religion and culture within contemporary English society. For example, contrary to Hick's argument,<sup>20</sup> religious groups, such as Christianity, should be able to maintain their exclusivist claims to enable negotiation to occur in order to achieve religious and cultural integration. The resultant negotiation could also take different forms, such as an education system. The next section explores the extent to which an educational

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix C for discussion of pluralists' view on religious and cultural integration.

system could facilitate negotiation among different groups in a pluralist society. It also examines whether church schools are compatible with such an education system.

### **3.7 The role of education in fostering social cohesion**

For an educational system to facilitate social integration or to cater for the diverse conceptions of the good life in a pluralist society, it should be able to inform the values underpinning various conceptions of the good life. Thus a pluralist education should satisfy the aims of education which are described in England and Wales as the development of the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical aspects, of all pupils (Department of Education, 1994a). Liberal pluralists such as Hare (1975) and Swann (1985) argued that such an education would equip pupils with skills and tools for critical and open assessment of belief systems or different conceptions of the good life. Hare (1975, p. 36) therefore, for example, insisted that a pluralist education would enable pupils to distance themselves from their own beliefs and circumstances of their birth in pursuit of knowledge (cf. White, 1982 and Bailey, 1984). Swann (1985) described such an education system as ‘multicultural education.’ The purpose of this education system, he argued, was to offer ‘all pupils a good, relevant and up to date education of life in Britain and the world as it is today’ (p. 315). This education system, he claimed, should enable pupils to ‘participate fully in shaping the society as a whole within a framework of commonly accepted values, practices and procedures.’ This is a problem for the ideology of pluralism which fails to provide an environment for negotiating such a framework of common ‘values, practices and procedures.’ Swann recognised this difficulty and pointed to the law of the land as the basis for

negotiating such a framework in a democratic pluralist society. He also argued that members of such a society should have an obligation to abide by such laws. He nevertheless conceded that, where minority groups had been accepted as a part of a community 'it frequently seems to be very much on the understanding that the onus is on them to adapt their lifestyles to conform to the traditional ...British way of life' (para 5). This concession surely undermined the idea that multicultural education developed equal underlying values to inform different conceptions of the good life. The fact that minority groups were expected to adapt and conform to the majority way of life was an indication that all values were not perceived as equal. Grimmitt (1994) therefore challenged the use of law of the land as the starting point for negotiation in a pluralist society. He argued that laws traditionally reflect a nation's cultural history and, more particularly, that of those who have been, and may continue to be, in positions of power. Such a perception of the law poses a problem for establishing a consensus for a common framework to support an education system. This difficulty suggests that the pluralists' view that 'all are saying the same thing' from different perspectives is impossible to sustain. Swann again conceded that even if a society successfully negotiated a common framework of 'values, practices and procedures' it would set limits on, or identify the aspects of, the minority cultural lifestyle to be preserved. Limiting what minority groups could, and should, preserve from their respective cultural lifestyles throws the whole ideology into disarray for several reasons. For example:

- Setting limits amounts to coercion of minority cultures to subscribe to a different way of life undermining their conceptions of the good life.

- Setting limits presupposes that the acceptance of minority cultures into the majority culture is conditional on their subscription to the majority culture.

Thus the ideology which thrives on the equality of values underlying different conceptions of the good life in a society undermines or contradicts its own philosophy. The implication is that the proposed form of an inclusive (multicultural) education fails to create an environment which could encourage different conceptions of the good life to flourish equally. O’Keeffe (1986) also highlighted the difficulty for a multicultural education (ME) to address the different conceptions of the good life found in a pluralist society by asserting that there was no consensus on its constitution. She quoted Philips-Bell (1981) as identifying three different perceptions of a multicultural education system as follows:

- ‘Education through many cultures’ – teachers using their discretion to draw on different elements of different cultures in their teaching if and when necessary
- ‘Education into many cultures’ – an attempt to understand a culture for the purpose of good race relations or as a worthwhile exercise
- ‘Education for a multi-cultural society’ – an attempt to eliminate institutional racism in order to promote equality and justice.

These three perceptions refer to a selection of certain aspects or elements of a culture to achieve a particular purpose in education. Such a selection could undermine the culture in question because the majority culture might set the criteria for, and conduct, the selection primarily for its own benefit. For this reason, O’Keeffe was correct to argue that multicultural education covered a range of different practices such as the development of a self-image, teaching the mother tongue, bilingual competence, dietary needs, racial discrimination and a critique of racism and

ethnocentrism (1986, p. 130). However, the acceptance of O’Keeffe’s perception of multicultural education (ME) could imply that ME attempted to coerce individuals and certain groups to subscribe to a particular (majority) conception of the good life. Thus individuals had no choice in relation to the form of education given and received. This gave the impression that an education process was deemed unsatisfactory or unacceptable unless it contained some elements of multiculturalism even though there was no consensus on the criteria for selecting such elements (O’Keeffe, 1986). Furthermore, the assumption that multicultural education provides a range of educational options for pupils is a fantasy because the ideology of pluralism fails to allow universally acceptable criteria for selecting such options. Saunders (1982) also illustrated the difficulty of a multicultural education system achieving a common education for a multicultural society with the analogy of a salad ‘washed and tossed in oil’, which he expressed as follows.

Each ingredient remains recognisable within the salad, but each very subtly contributes its own flavour to the overall flavour; the dominant flavours are muted, but no flavour is lost (p. 13).

Achieving the type of multicultural education system that Saunders advocated should involve some controversial and conflict-provoking measures. First, there should be a balancing method to allow all ingredients to form part of the salad with their identities untouched. Thus all the ingredients should be equally valued and accepted as equally beneficial to the salad from the pluralists’ perspective. Second, the dominant or the majority ingredient should be curbed to enable both the majority and minority flavours to blend. Thus integration could not be possible with either majority or

minority or both cultures remaining untouched thereby undermining the first measure. The implication is that Saunders' salad could not be easily achieved because it would require pushing and shifting of the available ingredients within a bowl which would not be always comfortable for either the major or minor ingredients. Thus there could not be a multicultural education in a multicultural society without give and take from the cultures represented in the society. Saunders, however, conceded that the salad analogy could only provide a static view of society, which might lose its balance unless there was a constant introduction of different flavours into the salad. Thus a multicultural education and society would run the risk of failing to meet the educational needs of the individual cultures within a society if it insisted on leaving them untouched and unchanged. There should be a regular process of adding and eliminating some elements from the multicultural education system in order to meet the educational needs of all members of the society. Failure to make the system dynamic could mean the loss of the balance of the different flavours, or each cultural group insisting on the inclusion of its own selected ingredients in the salad. Such insistence would most likely upset the overall flavour of the salad. This raises the question of whether modern English society is sufficiently dynamic to maintain all the cultural ingredients and flavours in its education system. The fact that the English language is still the main language and the official medium of expression in public institutions in modern English society undermines the concept of a multicultural education and the notion that all cultural ingredients are equally valued. The use of the official language in the education system in England could suggest that minority cultures should have to give up their cultural identity in the form of a language or a

dialect to be acceptable in the majority culture. By implication, the insistence on a common language such as English denies the minority groups their sense of belonging. Moreover, particular languages are inextricably linked to certain cultures so that separation of the two could undermine a particular culture. It should not be surprising therefore that Swann acknowledged the inadequacy of 'multicultural education' as an appropriate or an acceptable education system for a pluralist society because it tended to imply separatism. For example, some schools in predominantly all-white areas might not accept that the issues involved in multicultural education concerned them. It was precisely for this reason that Dhondy (1982) was very dismissive of the phrase 'multicultural education' and described it as:

...a massive public relations exercise ... that the Schools Council, the Humanities Curriculum Project and other white-haired respectables have disseminated as an answer to the contradictions that black youth point up in the schools (quoted in O'Keeffe, 1986).

Swann therefore coined the phrase 'Education for All' as the appropriate type of education in the pluralist English society. He quoted the Department of Education and Science's (DES) paper 'The School Curriculum' (1981) to emphasise the significance of 'Education for All' in a pluralist society as follows:

Since school education prepares the child for adult life, the way in which the school helps him to develop his potential must also be related to his subsequent needs and responsibilities as an active member of our society...It helps neither the children nor the nation, if the schools do not prepare them for the realities of the adult world (pp.317-318).

This raises questions about the nature of 'adult life' and its realities. He failed to provide any substantive evidence of the nature of adult life; however, it was possible



to deduce what he might mean from his subsequent assertions. Swann argued that a good education in England must reflect the diverse nature of English society and the wider world. He spoke of the aims of such an education as:

...to help pupils understand the world in which they live, and the interdependence of individuals, groups and nations (DES, 1981).

and to provide

every youngster with the knowledge, understanding and skills to function effectively as an individual, as a citizen of the wider national society in which he lives and in the interdependent world community of which he is also a member (p. 319).

Based on the above extracts, it is safe to conclude that Swann's reference to the 'adult life' meant a life in the pluralist English society reflective of the wider world. In this respect, the reality of such a life was to accept the existence of the right to differ, to respect and to protect the values underpinning that difference. In order to achieve that reality, Swann insisted that 'Education for All' should:

Broaden the horizons of all pupils to a greater understanding and appreciation of the diversity of value systems and lifestyles which are now present in our society whilst also enabling and assisting ethnic minority communities to maintain what they regard as the essential elements of their cultural identities (pp. 465-6).

In other words, schools must avoid an imposition of 'a predetermined and rigid "cultural identity" on any youngster, thus restricting his or her freedom to decide as far as possible for themselves their own future way of life' (p. 323). In order to make informed choices, 'all pupils should be given the knowledge and skills needed...to determine their own individual identities, free from preconceived or imposed

stereotypes of their “place” in that society’ (pp. 316-7). Furthermore, the curriculum for all pupils ‘must be permeated by a genuine pluralist perspective which should inform and influence both the selection of content and the teaching materials used’ (p. 327). For example, history and geography syllabuses must be multicultural in their content and global in their perspective (p. 318). Religious education in the curriculum must provide pupils with the opportunity ‘to enhance their understanding of a variety of religious beliefs and practices thus offering them an insight into values and concerns of different communities’ (p. 466). The success of the curriculum that Swann proposed depended on the value attached to each cultural element. To refer again to the marriage analogy, negotiation is crucial to the acceptance of differences in value systems underlying each cultural perception of the good life. Similarly, Saunders’ salad analogy has also shown that, if all ethnic groups insisted on the inclusion of more of their cultural elements to the curriculum, not all cultures would find it worthwhile. This makes the selection of the contents of the curriculum problematic. A favourable scenario for Swann’s proposed education system in a pluralist society is to select from minority cultures what the majority culture finds acceptable. This could mean selecting certain elements of a particular belief system in isolation or out of context and thus rendering them meaningless. While such a scenario may be acceptable to a section of society, it could reduce the significance of that particular element of an identified belief system or culture. However, like most pluralists, Swann fell into the trap of being prescriptive or assuming that there was only one way to prepare young people to live in modern English society and the modern world. Another problem for Swann was that he advocated freedom of choice

for all pupils, but undermined his own argument by excluding institutions or cultures that he considered had preconceived ideas. This is a classic example of what the ideology does best, to declare unacceptable views that fail to conform to its perceptions. The conclusion is that the 'Education for All' failed to provide for the different conceptions of the good life in a pluralist society, and thereby failed to generate the expected tolerance and social cohesion. The question therefore is whether church schools could provide such an education to inform the values underpinning the different conceptions of the good life in a pluralist society. As discussed in Chapter Six, church schools could provide Christian education with the capacity to exceed the expectation of the education envisaged by the concept of 'Education for All.' For example, Christian education would take the Biblical or the Christian concept of Man as its starting point. With that starting point, Christian education would seek to satisfy the educational needs of Man as made in the image and likeness of God. The nature of Man (Section 6: 3) reveals his educational needs as spiritual (being like God), environmental (relationship to the created order) and social (relationships with individuals and the wider society). Thus church schools should offer Christian education which prepares pupils to live in diverse communities without coercion or manipulation. One of the purposes of the empirical study (Chapter Six and Seven) was to investigate the nature and mission of church schools, and the extent to which they could satisfy human beings' educational needs. The next section, however, explores the fourth identified reason as to why church schools' education could be compatible with liberal education.

### **3.8 The adaptability of church schools to a market economy**

The fourth reason for church schools' compatibility with liberal education is their ability to adapt to diverse social constraints. The 1980 Education Act introduced a market economy into education with the belief that it would foster a competitive ethic in individual schools, promoting choice and thus enhancing the quality of education. McLaughlin (2000, p. 92) put it thus:

The essential feature of this model is the view that education is best provided through a 'marketplace' of different kinds of school, each competing for 'customers' (parents) who are in possession of information and of resources to choose schools in line with their own educational desires.

Thus the main objective of the market economy in education was to provide choice and enhance the quality of education so that bad schools could be driven out by the good ones. Grace (2002) saw market economy in education as making schools accountable to the education 'consumers' in the form of published school league tables, school test scores and external examination results. The implication was that maintained schools could compete against one another in terms of attracting best pupils to enhance their academic performances or results. The idea of schools competing for best pupils raised a number of issues for church schools, whose underlying aim of education was to provide an alternative form of education – a specifically Christian education based on the equality and uniqueness of individual human beings before God to that of LEA schools. The apparent aim of church school education encountered contrasting views concerning a possible response to market values in education. One view was that the values of a market economy in education

should help schools to ‘counteract complacency and inefficiency...and provide an antidote to undue state power and monopoly in education’ (McLaughlin, 2000, p. 91)<sup>21</sup>. In other words, market forces should set schools free from central bureaucracy and entrust them to local control to enable them to initiate reform for schools to become more efficient, effective, and responsive to educational consumers (parents). Chubb and Moe (1990), for example, were enthusiastic about the potential benefits of market values in education, as is expressed in the following terms:

The whole world is being swept by a realisation that markets have tremendous advantages over central control and bureaucracy (1990, pp. 45-6).

There appears to be nothing controversial about church schools seeking efficiency through competition with other schools for best pupils and eventually better examination results. However, the dilemma for church schools becomes more apparent when the other view is against the values of market economy in education. This particular school of thought insists that market values and practices in education are a distortion and a corruption of the very nature and purpose of education<sup>22</sup>. For example Ranson (1993, p. 336) wrote:

Action in the market is driven by a single common currency...The only effective means upon which to base action is the calculation of personal advantage: clout in the market derives from the power of superior resources to subordinate others in competitive exchange.

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<sup>21</sup> Chubb and Moe (1990 & 1992); Edwards *et al* (1992) also subscribed to the view that a market economy helped school to be more effective.

<sup>22</sup> Ranson (1993) held such a view.

The underlying assumptions, such as emphasis on the pursuit of personal or individual advantage over the common good of a community, are at odds with the educational mission of church schools. This mission is historically identified as providing education for the poor, otherwise excluded from education, based on a Christian world view (Chapter Two). Market values (i.e. the maximisation of the proportion of bright pupils to achieve success) are identified as being at odds with the Christian education offered in church schools because they pay little or no attention to whoever or whatever gets hurt or left out with the overriding concern that a school achieves success in terms of public examinations outcomes. To this end, a successful church school in the market (in terms of public examinations) might need to manipulate pupil intake and operate a policy that would exclude the potentially unprofitable pupils in a market environment. Writers such as Pring (1996) and Sullivan (2000) have been sceptical of the compatibility of a church school's educational mission and market forces. For example, Pring wrote:

The market model of individuals all pursuing their own respective interests leads not to an improvement of the general good but only to an improvement of the positional good of some vis-à-vis other competitors and also to a deterioration of the overall situation (p. 65).

The emphasis of market values operates against the community spirit that should underlie education in a church school. Sullivan has also taken the view that 'to turn education into a commodity...undermines collective action and ... causes us to fail to understand how...individual choices cumulatively impact on the social fabric' (2000, pp. 63-4). Effectively, the presence of market values in a church school undermines its ability to work as a unit in a community. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of

England and Wales (1997) shared both Pring's and Sullivan's view, and produced the following critique of market ideology in education:

Education is not a commodity to be offered for sale. The distribution of funding solely according to the dictates of market forces is contrary to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the common good. Teachers and pupils are not economic units whose value is seen merely as a cost element on the school's balance sheet. To consider them in this way threatens human dignity. Education is a service provided by society for the benefit of all its young people...the most vulnerable and the most disadvantaged – whom we have a sacred duty to serve. Education is about the service of others rather than the service of self (CES, 1997a, p. 13).

The question arising from the claim and the counterclaim of the compatibility of a church-school education with market values reflects the extent to which a church school is able to function within the structures and constraints of a society driven by market values. As stated above, seeking to work efficiently and to achieve success or a high standard of education for pupils within a school is an obvious educational vision or mission of a church school (Chapters Two and Six), but this good may not be best realised through a market economy. This means that the process through which efficiency and a high standard of education are achieved is the underlying factor of a church school's distinctiveness. Novak (1993) therefore argued that it was wrong to assume incompatibility between a Christian education and market values. Grace echoed Novak's sentiments and argued for a workable combination of the two sets of values.

Christian culture is aware of the injunction to render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's and a workable synthesis of market and mission in education might be regarded as a contemporary manifestation of that injunction (p. 182).

Grace identified a good educational leadership as the key to achieving such ‘a workable synthesis between the demands of market survival and the preservation of the integrity of the distinctive principles of Roman Catholic [*church*] schooling’ (p. 181). The need for such a workable synthesis could be an acknowledgement that church schools could work within the structures and constraints of contemporary English society. Such an acknowledgement should enable church schools to find relevance in a market ridden society without losing their nature and educational mission described in Chapters Two and Six. Church schools being relevant in a market ridden society and maintaining their educational mission is consistent with Jesus’ prayer for the Christian church (and implicitly for its associated institutions):

I do not pray that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou shouldst keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world... (John 17:15-16).

The need for church schools to work within the constraints of contemporary society is also consistent with Man’s creational purpose to work in, and protect, the created order (Genesis 2:15). The implied mysterious bond between Man and his environment in the Biblical narrative on creation should enable church schools to assume the responsibility of preparing pupils to be what God intends.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has examined the nature of liberal education in the literature and has identified some philosophical and theoretical reasons to commend its compatibility with church schools’ education. It has also argued that critics of church schools are



philosophically and theoretically wrong to advocate the removal of religion or the church involvement in education from the English education system. It has argued that the faith stance or position of church schools does not undermine the value of autonomy in education and the importance of the individual. In fact, it provides for a religiously educated person to be liberally educated as well. It has taken issue with humanist writers such as Hirst and White, and argued that church schools could not undermine individual autonomy. The reason is that coercion and imposition are incompatible with the Christian faith itself. This means that the charge of narrow-mindedness, uncritical and irrational thinking made against church schools is a misrepresentation of their Christian foundation. It has demonstrated that Christian theology and religious education continue to generate self-critique in the form of empirical research studies to undermine any suggestion of the uncritically passing on of beliefs. This chapter has also highlighted some of the main difficulties discussed in the literature in relation to social integration or togetherness advocated by both descriptive and prescriptive pluralism. It has concluded that a pluralist society needs a mechanism or a framework of common values to enable different groups to work as a team, and thereby to establish unity in diversity. However, the educative process identified to provide such a mechanism is prescriptive, and denies different individuals and groups the opportunity to maintain their uniqueness as the basis of their learning experience. For an educative process in a society with diversity of backgrounds to flourish, it needs to take account of differences in ability in order to find a workable synthesis of their differences. It has maintained that the Gospel mandate for the Church and its institutions to preach and teach in every corner of the

world (Matthew 28:19) requires church schools to work within both favourable and unfavourable conditions to enable them to flourish in the marketplace. This means that church schools are inextricably linked with working within the constraints of society, and therefore have the innate ability to find a working synthesis of their mission and market values. The schools' contribution to education in a secular society is examined empirically in Chapter Six. Meanwhile, the next chapter explores selected research studies, with indicative findings in relation to church schools' contribution to education in a pluralist society.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**A REVIEW OF RESEARCH STUDIES**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews a selected number of empirical research studies relating to the contribution of church schools to the educative process in pluralist English society. Such a review reveals an ongoing dialogue, together with the existing state of knowledge in the proposed area of study. Identification of the ongoing dialogue helped this study to set out the research questions that attempted to find answers to fill gaps existing in the field, and to extend existing knowledge (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Furthermore, it helped to avoid possible repetition of existing research, and provided a foundation on which to build future or new research. It begins with the challenges faced in selecting empirical studies for a review.

#### **4.2 Challenges entailed in selecting studies for a review**

The major decision to be made concerned an appropriate or an acceptable way of presenting the review. The challenge was twofold: (i) whether to present an historical account of events with no reference to major themes and cultural settings; or (ii) whether to construct a thematic analysis located in a given cultural setting, even though it would obscure the historical sequencing of the review. As is shown in the next section, the review follows a thematic analysis in order to identify particular themes in relation to the denominational schools involved in the study. Following the challenges noted above and the required word limit of doctoral dissertation, this review was selective. There was a body of literature in Britain that was important to the whole discussion concerning aspects of Christian education. Nevertheless, it was neither helpful nor feasible to consider a complete list of work from the various

Christian denominations or critics, as this was far too large and wide-reaching to include here. However, there had been a number of recent research studies published relating to church schooling in England which were selected for review in this study. The criteria for the selection of research studies, listed below, were devised to enable this review to focus on those empirical studies that fell within them:

- studies and reports that contributed to church schooling debate in England since 2001 (see Chapter One, Section 1.2).
- studies and reports generated by the events and debate on church (faith) schooling since 2001.
- studies and reports described in (i) and (ii) above which had significantly illuminated the field of church (faith) schooling in England and were well-known and used internationally.

The empirical studies that satisfied these criteria were therefore few and, unsurprisingly, related to the CoE and the RC Church. These two denominations were the main providers of church school education in England. In view of this, the adopted style of the review was in the form of identified themes presented under each in turn of these specified denominations. Each study was examined for evidence of a particular denomination's understanding of the nature and mission of church schools. It also looked for evidence of whether the identified nature and mission of church schools contributed to intolerance in modern English society. While the selection criteria above are narrow and open to challenge, the unprecedented events in 2001 (Section 1.2) necessitated such criteria. Table 4:1 summarises the reviewed studies in the order of citation in this study.

**Table 4:1****Summary of research studies reviewed**

Author	Year	Title	Data Collection/Methodology
Dearing (Chairman of the Review Group)	2001	The way ahead: Church of England schools in the new millennium	Consultation, observation and evidence from 204 voluntary aided and controlled Anglican schools. British Humanist Association, National Secular Association. Local authorities and Ofsted
Reed, B, Bazalgette, J., Hutton, J., and Kehoe, I.	2002	Becoming Fit for Purpose: Leading Transformation in Church Schools	Interview accounts of three headteachers, the schools' leadership teams and focus group consisting of teachers, support staff and pupils.
Colson, I	2004	'Their Churches are at home': the communication and definition of values in four aided Church of England schools	Interview accounts of four headteachers, analysis of schools' admissions policies (prospectuses)
Grace, G	2002	Roman Catholic Schools: Mission, Markets and Morality	Interview accounts of 60 headteachers in London, Liverpool and Birmingham. 50 year-10 pupils from five London schools, 10 experts in Roman Catholic education schools prospectuses

**4.3 The Church of England (CoE) school research**

'The Way Ahead' (2001) was a landmark publication on the place of the CoE in the provision of both primary and secondary school education in England and Wales. It was the first major CoE report since Durham (1970) over thirty years ago. Moreover, the CoE adopted the report as its policy for its schools in England and Wales. Such an adoption made the report an important document for understanding the nature and mission of CoE schools in England and Wales from the CoE's perspective. The Archbishops' Council set up the Review Group following the 1998 General Synod of

the Church of England. The terms of reference were: (i) to assess the effectiveness of church schools' role in the church mission; (ii) to develop a strategy for the future of CoE schools; and (iii) to develop teaching as a vocation. The Review Group (hereafter Dearing) used a variety of methods to collect evidence for the report as is shown in Table 4:1. However, only one hundred and twenty eight out of the two hundred and four secondary schools fell into the definition of a church school adopted in this study (Section 2.7). Table 5:2 summarises the number of the Church of England schools that gave evidence to the Review Group.

**Table 4:2**

**Sample schools in Dearing's Report**

School	Aided	Controlled	Foundation	City Technology College	Total
Secondary	101	37	7	1	146
Middle	27	30	1	0	58
Total	128	67	8	1	204

**(Source: Dearing, 2001, p. 86: Appendix 2)**

The premise of the report was that the CoE schools were at the centre of the church's mission to the nation. Dearing identified the church mission in the following terms:

- to proclaim the Gospel
- to nourish Christians in their faith
- to bring others into the faith; and
- to nurture and maintain the dignity of the image of God in human beings through service, speaking out on important issues and working for social justice as part of that mission (chap. 3, para. 11)

The terms describing the mission of the church meant that the mission included the following: evangelism and service, word and action which involved taking God's love to people in their own environment and working for a better world; it also involved putting in place or advocating social and political structures that reflected God's plan or will for human life. This understanding raised a number of questions for Dearing's premise that the CoE schools were at the centre of the mission of the church. For example, what did Dearing mean by the schools' being at the centre of the mission of the church and was that mission communicated to the schools? Dearing provided no evidence to show that the schools actually understood their mission in the terms he described. However, there was evidence to show what Dearing meant by the CoE schools being at the centre of the church's mission. First, he argued that the effectiveness of the church's mission depended upon there being sufficient CoE schools across England. Second, he made a recommendation for the CoE to seek a partnership with local authorities, either to provide additional church secondary schools or to expand the existing schools in England. Certain assumptions about the nature and mission of the CoE schools were made in Dearing's argument and recommendation for providing a sufficient number of CoE schools. For example, there was an assumption that church schools held or were the key to the future of the CoE:

The Church has a major problem in attracting young people to its services as a means of discharging its mission ... In contrast, the Church has some 900,000 young people attending its schools ... the vast majority give their pupils the experience of the meaning of faith and of what it is to work and play in a community that seeks to live its beliefs and values (para. 3:4).



Dearing put it bluntly: ‘without the Church schools the Church would be reaching only a small minority of young people’ (para 3.6). This raised the question of whether church schools were an extension of the CoE’s missionary activity (i.e. proselytising). Finding an answer to this question was one of the main tasks of the empirical study reported in Chapter Six. However, Dearing provided no empirical evidence in his report to show that the church schools saw proselytism or evangelism as their mission within the church. Consequently, the report failed to establish the extent to which the CoE schools’ understanding of their mission corresponded with that of the CoE. Another assumption of the report was that church schools exhibited certain Christian values which justified their place in the mission of the CoE. This was nothing but presumption on the part of Dearing, since there was no evidence to show that the schools understood their nature and mission in those terms. The report’s assumption was expressed in the extract below:

...the justification for retaining and aspiring to extend its provision, as recommended in this report, cannot be simply this, when the state is willing to provide as never before and when there are so many calls on the Church’s limited resources. It is and must be because that engagement with children and young people in schools will, ... enable the Church...to: nourish those of the faith; encourage those of other faiths; and challenge those who have no faith (para. 1:13).

Dearing assumed that CoE schools knew that they were different from LEA schools in terms of: (i) their nature as a place for young people to engage with the church, and (ii) their mission being to provide an environment for young Christian people to be nourished and nurtured and for those without the Christian faith to learn and experience the faith in order to exercise their independent choice for or against any

subscription to it. Thus the justification for the CoE schools in modern English society was their distinctive Christian nature and mission. The argument advanced for the justification of the CoE schools also made a further assumption that the schools existed in partnership with local CoE churches and the wider Anglican Communion.

The school and Church are close together in partnership: the school and parish church see themselves as in active association – as an extended community – together at the heart of the Church mission to the community (para. 1:8).

Dearing insisted that the established partnership between the CoE and its schools placed the schools at the centre of the church's mission to English society. The implication was that church schools were a part, and an extension, of the wider worshipping community. Thus the nature and mission of CoE schools were typically expressed in the following extracts:

[The CoE] schools are places where the (Christian) faith is lived, and which therefore offer opportunities to pupils and their families to explore the truths of Christian faith, to develop spiritually and morally, and to have a basis for choice about Christian commitment (p. 12, Para 3.12)

Whether they (pupils) come into Church or not, Church schools are giving them the opportunity to know Christ, to learn in a community that seeks to live by his word and to engage in worship. Where pupils come from homes which are not Christian, or only nominally Christian, with parents who have little knowledge of the Bible, this is a gift they would not otherwise experience. For those from Christian homes it will help to develop their faith and endow them with knowledge they can pass on to their own children ... (Para 3.9).

The school aims to serve its community by providing education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers all its pupils (Dearing, pp. 14-15, Para 3.24).

A conclusion could be drawn from the extracts that the CoE schools provided an environment for the following to take place: (i) spiritual and moral development; (ii) development of a deeper relationship with God; and (iii) service to the wider community. In summary, the CoE schools were a ‘place where a particular (Christian) vision of humanity was offered’ as is expressed in the extract below:

... The Church school offers a spiritual and moral basis for the development of human wholeness and a sure foundation for personal and social values based on the person and ministry of Christ. The Church school offers a distinctive language for understanding life and interpreting human experience (3.26).

Dearing, effectively, saw the CoE schools as providing education for the whole person (spiritual, academic, social, moral and physical). Whether the CoE schools actually provided such an education was the aim of the empirical study reported in Chapters Six and Seven. Such an education would reflect the nature and ministry of Christ and provide an appropriate education for ‘Man’. This could explain Dearing’s view that individual CoE schools could only provide Christian education if they were distinctively Christian, as is expressed below:

...no church school can be considered as part of the Church mission unless it is distinctively Christian’ (para 1:11).

The eligibility for a church school’s participation in Christian education raised the question of the criteria for determining recognisable and distinctive Christian schools. One such criterion, according to Dearing, was for individual CoE schools to adopt

and practise the CoE's ethos statement.<sup>23</sup> He maintained that an eligible school had at least to observe the core minimum of the ethos statement, expressed thus:

- to appoint a Christian headteacher committed to maintaining the Christian character of the school in its day-to-day activities and in the curriculum
- to make the headteacher responsible for ensuring that a real act of Christian worship is held every day
- to see that the school life incorporates the values of the Christian faith with a high quality and meaningful religious education
- to oblige the headteacher to ensure that the school observes the major Christian festivals
- to proclaim that the school is a Christian and Church of England school in various ways (para 4:6)

This minimum core of the ethos statement placed a special responsibility on headteachers as the main guarantors of the values that underpinned church schools' distinctiveness.

...headteachers are spiritual and academic leaders of the school. Excellence in headship requires visionary, inspired leadership and management centred on the school as a worshipping community, where educational and academic excellence for all pupils is pursued in a Christian context (para 8:1).

The headteacher, effectively, was the embodiment of the values underpinning a distinctively Christian school (Para 8:2). Such a claim posed the question of the definition of the term 'Christian' and the criteria for selecting 'Christian headteachers' for CoE schools. The report assumed that such a definition was broadly self-evident and left individual CoE schools' governors to determine their own detailed definitions. The question therefore was how individual school governors

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<sup>23</sup> Appendix D is the Anglican schools' adopted ethos statement

might define the term ‘Christian’ in selecting a headteacher. The lack of evidence for such definitions led to the following speculations. A Christian may be defined as a person who has made a personal response to the proclaimed Gospel of Jesus Christ by the church, and is continually nourished in the faith. It could also be defined as one or more of the following:

- a baptised member of a church
- a regular attender at Christian worship
- as having a personal relationship with God through Christ
- a moral person

The above list of possible definitions provides considerable leeway for each CoE school’s governors to determine their own definition of the term ‘Christian’ for the following reasons: (i) constituents of the governing body vary from school to school (ii) individual governors have a different understanding of the term ‘Christian’, and (iii) each governing body needs consensus on a definition. The point here is that each governing body is different, and is eager to safeguard its school’s distinctive nature and mission. Thus the perceived distinctiveness of a school determines its understanding of a Christian headteacher. The report puts it thus: ‘the foundation governors (*church-appointed governors*) will have an especial care for the school’s Christian character’ (para 8.6). While the report only assumed that the definition of the term ‘Christian’ was self-evident, and the governing bodies of CoE schools also determined it in accordance with their distinctiveness, the Bible gives a clear indication of the factors that contribute to the understanding of the term. The Bible takes the view that a Christian person acknowledges his or her sinfulness before God in the light of His word, repents, accepts God’s forgiveness and His free gift of

eternal life through Christ (Romans 6:23) and is baptised. In other words, factors such as personal belief in God, repentance, confession of the belief (Romans 10:8-10), and baptism underlie the understanding of the term. The point is that the foundation governors of a CoE school would appoint Christian headteachers in accordance with the CoE's understanding and teaching of the Christian person. The appointment of Christian headteachers as the embodiment of the Christian values underpinning the CoE schools' distinctiveness and the view that they were at the centre of the CoE's mission to the English nation should confirm the church's perception of their schools as being evangelistic in nature or an evangelistic tool for its mission (cf. Section 2:4). However, the perception of the church schools as an evangelistic tool for the church could prompt their critics to conclude that the church and its schools condoned indoctrination of and the undermining of the autonomy of pupils. Thus a genuine fear of critics accusing the church schools as such (cf. Section 3:4) could have led Dearing (2001) to argue thus: the church schools *were* 'not, and should not be, agents of proselytism where pupils are expected to make a Christian commitment' (para.3.12). The word 'proselytism' denotes a convert from one religion to another, for example, a conversion of a Gentile to Judaism. However, in recent years, certain secular (BSA) and religious groups and nations (Israel) perceive proselytism in a negative sense, for example, to characterise evangelism. These groups would define evangelism as an inducement to convert either by force or bribe. Thus Christians might use hospitals and schools as an inducement to put pressure on people at a disadvantage (Barrington-Ward, 1983). In this sense, Dearing would be correct in his assertion that the church schools could and should not be agents of proselytism because coercion

and manipulation of people to accept, or convert to, the Christian faith is a contradiction in terms (cf. Section 3.4) or are incompatible with the Christian faith. The question of whether the church used its schools as an inducement to coerce people to become baptised members is discussed in Section 6:3:1 with the conclusion that the church schools' use of church-affiliation criterion was not designed to coerce or manipulate parents in need of schools for their children. Thus the criterion was consistent with the law and could be a means to draw pupils from a diversity of socio-economic and religious backgrounds to church schools. The argument that the church schools could not be agents of proselytism, however, was at variance with the whole concept of the CoE schools being at the centre of the mission of the church. For example, the very idea of the CoE schools presupposes a form of proselytism or evangelism which involves the proclamation of the Christian Gospel to pupils with its implications either in word or in action or both. The way forward for the church schools to engage in proselytism without coercion would, and should, be through an invitation to pupils to experience the Christian faith in action. Such an experience of the Christian faith could, and should, take the form of Christian witness of pupils and teachers in word and deed. Thus pupils' experience of, or participation in, RE lessons and collective worship in a Christian context could, and should, provide them with the opportunity either to accept or reject the Christian faith. The offer of an opportunity for pupils to experience and participate in RE and collective worship could, and should, also enable them to engage in the critical examination of the Christian faith and other world religions. Moreover, the historical purpose of the CoE school education as providing Christian education to liberate pupils from social and

spiritual poverty presupposes a form of proselytism (cf. Section 2:3). Thus proselytism was an unavoidable aspect of the nature and mission of the CoE schools, which either implicitly or explicitly expected pupils to accept or reject the Christian faith. It was one of the aims of this study to find out whether the CoE schools lived out their espoused values in reality. A serious question of the apparent reluctance to countenance church schools as agents of proselytism arose from the report. The failure of the report to provide a concrete reason for its reluctance to regard church schools as places, or agents, of proselytism encouraged this study to speculate on possible reasons. For example, it was possible that the report wanted to identify the CoE schools as ‘fit for purpose’ in the pluralist English society. This would have meant that the CoE schools provided a different version of the educational philosophy of LEA schools, instead of providing an alternative to them. While such an understanding would have been consistent with the tenets of the ideology of pluralism, it would have undermined the CoE schools’ uniqueness or distinctiveness. For the CoE to provide a different perspective of a particular educational philosophy would mean that there was no distinctive purpose to justify the separateness of its schools. It would also show that the CoE and its schools subscribed to the pluralists’ philosophy of education, which provided no criteria to adjudicate between right and wrong. Furthermore, if the reluctance of the report to present the CoE schools as being agents of proselytism was a conscious strategy to make the schools acceptable to, or compatible with, the tenets of the ideology of pluralism, then it failed and contradicted itself. The reason was that the report proclaimed the CoE schools as inherently inclusive, as is expressed in the extract below:



The Church approach to education as a whole ...is one founded on a notion of inclusiveness rather than separation from the community...The composition of its school population...reflects the composition of the neighbourhood ...(para 3:29).

Thus the inclusiveness of the CoE schools involved pupil intake which as Chapter Six of this study will show was able to draw pupils from throughout the social spectrum. The point here is that the CoE schools endeavoured to maintain their religious character and yet remained compatible with the tenets both of the ideology of pluralism and of liberal education. This was evident in Dearing's assertion that the CoE schools located in multi-ethnic and multifaith areas were 'respectful of the faith of parents, but offered the pupils an experience of the Christian faith, both through the everyday life of the school and through inclusive forms of worship' (para 3:30). This means that proselytism took different forms, such as through the hidden curriculum, in the CoE schools. Moreover, Dearing's use of the quotation below was also an indication of the CoE schools' engagement in proselytism:

Church schools... know in their viscera that this is not just about acquiring skills and good examination results. It is about forming people who have the moral strength and spiritual depth to hold to a course and weather ups and downs....who know that economic competition is not more important than family life and love of neighbour and that technical innovation is not more important than reverence for the beauty of creation....who, however academically and technically skilful, are not reduced to inarticulate embarrassment by the great questions of life and death, meaning and truth. Church schools themselves embody the truth that a context of firm principles suffused by faith and love is the best and right basis for learning and growing (Carey, 1988 quoted in para. 23).

This extract assumes that the Church schools had an understanding of their nature and purpose but failed to provide empirical evidence to support this claim. Nevertheless,

it was an indication that church schools provided an alternative education to those of LEA which implied a form of proselytism in church schools. Moreover, the fact that one of Dearing's main recommendations was the expansion of the CoE secondary schools to ensure the effectiveness of the mission of the church was another implicit admission that the CoE schools should engage in evangelism or proselytism. Although Dearing provided no empirical evidence to explain the high demand for places in the CoE schools, it could be argued that the schools provided the CoE with a means for reaching many young people and their parents with the Gospel, and this was certainly a kind of proselytism. However, Dearing failed to provide the CoE schools with the vision that could have enabled them to understand their own nature and mission within the church and to express them publicly in their prospectuses. Thus this review revealed the need for an empirical study to explore the extent to which the CoE schools' own understanding of their nature and mission corresponded to those identified in the Dearing's report.

Another study reviewed in relation to Anglican schools was 'Becoming Fit for Purpose: Leading Transformation in Church Schools.' It was a small-scale study by Reed, B., Bazalgette, J., Hutton, J., and Kehoe, I. (2002). It attempted to test some of the views expressed in the Dearing Report. For example, were headteachers the embodiment of the Christian values that were claimed to underlie the distinctiveness of the CoE schools? Another purpose of the study was to provide evidence-based insights for the future management of church schools. The study examined three failing Anglican schools which improved dramatically after the appointment of

committed Christian headteachers. The data for the study were collected as stated in Table 4:1. Examination of the data identified three main management approaches of the headteachers that contributed to the schools' dramatic improvements. The task for this review, therefore, was to ascertain how the headteachers' Christian faith influenced their management approaches which led to the schools' dramatic improvements. The headteachers' first management approach was to establish personal relationships with pupils. This approach stemmed from their personal Christian faith and experience of God's love which, they described as 'tough.' This experience of God's 'tough' love defined their understanding of 'true caring' as consisting of having personal knowledge of pupils, discipline, firmness and fairness. The headteachers expressed this understanding in the following terms:

I saw caring as vigorous caring. I am seen as tough because I care. Care goes with challenge (Headteacher).

When I came, it was a caring Christian community. Now it has become a challenging Christian community (Headteacher).

Pupils and parents also saw the tough nature of the headteachers' caring, and responded to those headteachers accordingly, as the following extracts show:

They allow you to succeed. ... He's the main person here ... He tries to sort things for us ... There's the discipline factor; he's tough. There was no more menacing, no more nicking lunch money (pupil).

He (headteacher) presents a caring and supportive attitude and invites interactions with others. He actively discourages bad behaviour but rewards pupils who strive to achieve their goals (Parent).

He (headteacher) makes it quite clear what is expected of them in uniform/discipline/attitude etc. There is, therefore, an improvement in self-worth (Parent).

This understanding of true caring also involved the headteacher in ‘challenging pupils to perform to the level of their abilities.’ The headteachers had no reason to doubt the ability of pupils of all backgrounds because ‘their own awareness of “new life” gives them confidence that pupils could also change, so as headteachers they can really believe in them’ (para 6.3, B). With this confidence, the headteachers’ were proud to have the privilege of working with disadvantaged and disruptive pupils, as is expressed in the following terms:

We are proud of working with disadvantaged children (Headteacher).

We have changed the pastoral system in the school from being a benevolent one to being a loving one. It’s about doing right for the individual and not just coping with them (Headteacher).

The headteachers’ exercise of true caring was a witness and inspiration to pupils, the staff, and governors. They described the headteachers relationship with pupils in the school in the following terms:

She (headteacher) is a very strong person but also caring and loving (Pupil).

He (headteacher) seems to know all of us personally and he concentrates on people’s good points and gives us a lot of praise (Pupil).

The headteacher saw pupils for what they are which did not blind him to what they did. Other people were not able to look at them in this way and called them rubbish (Teacher).

Students like the small award schemes and certificates and merits introduced by the Head. Gives pupils something to work a little bit harder for. Work harder because of the general feel-good factor now in place in the school (Support Staff).

He emphasises all the time that every child is precious. They can make a mistake and you forgive them. It's about doing right for the individual and not just coping with them (Governor).

This management approach inspired confidence, self-belief and self-worth in disadvantaged and disruptive pupils who had lost hope in the education system. The values aspired in pupils from the headteachers' management approach confirmed the CoE schools' ability to offer education compatible with liberal education and thereby contributed to a tolerant society. The point is that Christian headteachers saw each pupil as a person made in the image of God who had the capability of performing to their ability level. The headteachers' second management approach was the extension of the personal relationship to the teaching staff. The report identified teachers at their lowest ebb, with little or no confidence in their own professional credibility. However, the headteachers personal relationship with the teachers revitalised their perception of the nature and mission of the schools, and revamped their own teaching methodologies and professionalism. The extracts below describe the impact that the headteachers' relationship had on some of the teaching staff:

He (headteacher) had faith and belief in me as a person and in my capabilities; he did not rely on the views of others but judged me on my work (Teacher).

I now feel empowered to do what I was trying to do before. I feel appreciated and I feel confident ... That's true of most staff. We've found avenues opened up for ourselves, we're doing things well and doing new things... In the past whatever you did made no difference. It was very disheartening (Senior Staff).

These extracts confirm the essential role of Christian headteachers as the embodiment of the Christian values that underpin church schools. The values they exhibited

boosted the morale and the professional credibility of their teachers. The headteachers' approach enabled unsatisfactory attitudes to become satisfactory because it inspired self-confidence in the teachers and removed fears and suspicions. Such an attitude is an example of the nature of Christian love as is expressed in the Bible: 'There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love' (1 John 4:18). A diocesan officer expressed the impact of the approach of one of the headteachers in the study in the following terms:

Before the headteacher arrived, the school was in Special Measures, with very poor academic standards, poor behaviour, and low levels of attendance. Staff morale was low, with many stress-related illnesses. The new headteacher very soon strengthened the Senior Management Team and made great efforts to restore faith in both pupils' and staff abilities (A Diocesan Advisor).

The thrust of the headteachers' second management approach was that their personal relationships with the teaching staff provided a Christian witness through the teachers' approach to teaching, relationship with other teachers, and relationship with pupils. This approach should essentially underlie a church school's ethos, and their consideration confirmed the headteachers' key role as the embodiment of the Christian values in the schools. The approach evidently provided Christian witness which challenged both Christian and non-Christian parents to participate in school activities. The following quotations provide evidence that this witness took place in the schools:

The most important thing that the head does is to value every child as an individual and assist each child in achieving his or her potential; whatever that might be (Parent).

I was not involved with the school before, and would not have sent my child to the school. However, I felt confident to do so...with the new head. (Parent)

The third feature of the headteachers' management approach was the emphasis on their own personal Christian faith. This supported the first two approaches of bearing Christian witness to pupils, the staff, parents and school governors. The following quotations confirm the witness nature of the headteachers' Christian faith:

Although not all of our students come from Christian families, they know that the head is a committed Christian and respect him for that too. He leads by example in the way he deals with people (Teacher, p. 51)

The Head puts Gospel values at the heart of the school; he makes frequent reference to these values when talking to staff and pupils (Teacher, p. 52)

The head has a belief in his calling and vocation, and in the guidance of the Holy Spirit. ... He professes his faith in an interesting and in no sense formidable way (Governor)

He has strong beliefs and tries to reflect them in the way he runs the school (Pupil)

The practical application of the headteachers' Christian faith required the employment of their management and leadership skills in directing pupils, teaching and non-teaching staff, and other school resources. However, it was their perception of pupils as made in the image of God that determined how the schools were managed, as is expressed in the following terms:

The head's motivation is us! He cares about us, about trying to improve things and he provides new facilities. He asks our opinions. (Pupil)

He has created an atmosphere of confidence and sense of direction; everyone is excited about the future development of the school. His positive and hardworking attitude has passed on to the children (Support staff)

Before the current Head came there was no sense of vision in the school but she has a vision which is bigger than the school, seen by the way she speaks of her desire to enable our children to succeed – it is more important to her than her career. She believes that loving the children is the way she can help them to succeed. (Diocesan Advisor)

The headteachers' Christian faith also affected the nature of the schools' acts of worship. The report identified acts of worship as a means of accepting, respecting and protecting individual uniqueness. Pupils, teachers and all those present were treated as equal in the sight of God during an act of worship. It was used as an opportunity for teachers and pupils to accept their roles as teachers and learners before God, and to seek to fulfil their roles with God's help. The following extracts show how acts of worship were perceived and understood by different participants:

I am leading people with what people call traditional Christian moral values but I do not demand that they be Christians themselves. This gives them values about citizenship which are more important than the values they see in the pop idols (Headteacher).

My son claims that stories told in assemblies have morals and teach pupils that it is never too late to change, putting bad experiences behind you and striving to become a better person (Parent).

Assemblies help us see another way of thinking. Awards are given out with lots of encouragement, we are told stories and examples of things, like forgiving people. We have visitors come in to talk to us about faith or a special occasion. They help by teaching us more about Christianity while not pushing us into anything (Pupil).



In this respect, an act of worship enabled pupils and staff to belong to a Christian family and ultimately to God through Christ. Such awareness of belonging and of individual uniqueness at school worship could be a direct challenge to Hirst's claim that church schools restricted or undermined pupils' autonomy. Furthermore, the extracts show that the Christian headteachers exhibited Christian values in their respective school communities without coercing pupils to subscribe to the Christian faith. An act of worship therefore promotes autonomy, resulting in the ability to make personal and reasonable judgements based on available empirical evidence. Teachers and pupils are able to gather evidence of the impact of Christian values upon individual and corporate relationships, and upon that evidence to make judgements for or against commitment to Christ. An act of worship provides an opportunity for accepting and confirming individual uniqueness and its place in the school community. Such an individual identification of difference broadens pupils' horizon of the world outside school and their ability to learn to live within it. The extract below is revealing:

The most effective assembly I have witnessed since arriving at the school was the morning after September 11<sup>th</sup>. The pupils demonstrated a real sense of understanding of the situation, sorrow, and a sense of belonging to a group. (Teacher)

Reed *et al.* used their small-scale fieldwork enquiry to confirm Dearing's theory that Christian headteachers were the embodiment of the Christian values that underpinned the distinctiveness of the CoE schools. However, there was a question of whether this understanding influenced church schools' own understanding of their nature and mission. This question suggested that Reed *et al.* failed to provide a means for the

church schools to discover their own understanding of their nature and role in the mission of the church. The identified failure of the report also raised another question about the reasons for its failure. The following could be some of the reasons:

1. The research questions of the study required a specific research method such as the one it adopted (Table 4:1)
2. The research method adopted could not permit the study to collect information that could have enabled church schools' understanding of their nature to be expressed.

This confirmed the earlier suggestion of a gap in the empirically-based studies relating to the church schools' understanding of their nature and mission. It also confirmed a gap between church schools' theoretical and practical understanding of their nature. Thus there was a gap between the espoused values and values lived out in church schools. One of the aims of this study was to examine church schools' own public documents, such as their prospectuses, in an attempt to fill some of the gaps identified.

Colson (2004) also conducted a small-scale qualitative enquiry to test the theory that headteachers were a primary source of values within church schools (Johnson and McCreery, 1999; Dearing 2001; Reed et al., 2002). The method used to collect data for his study is described in Table 4:1. He concluded that while headteachers were the embodiment of the Christian values underpinning the CoE schools, they (headteachers) saw the teachers as the essential means for the delivery and maintenance of the distinctive values of the CoE schools as is evident from the following extracts:

We have very few members of staff who are practising Christians, probably 20%. Quite honestly...when I interview staff I say to them that this is a Church school; there are certain values and standards of a Christian nature, which we uphold, and we don't want people coming in and rubbishing it or not respecting it. All the staff have to sing the hymns. ...otherwise the kids...won't sing and the whole worship becomes tacky... (p. 75).

I do believe that the key positions in a school like ours have to be people who are comfortable enough with their belief to be able to discuss their belief (p. 75).

(It is) a quite fragile effect and external circumstances can completely destroy it ... but one of the things ... is that you cannot maintain that enhancing effect if you don't have a critical number of staff who actually do support the school (p.75).

These extracts confirm Reed's finding that headteachers' personal relationship with teachers was important for the CoE schools, if such schools were to maintain their Christian values and witness. Colson, therefore, came to the obvious conclusion that headteachers and teachers were the main sources for creating a Christian environment in the CoE schools. This environment enabled 'true caring', which appreciated individual pupil's capabilities. The implication was that pupils deemed weak were given the necessary support to realise their potential, as is expressed in the extract below:

We make sure that students from the most able to the least able get a share in the best teaching. Now, I think those are ways which individually don't make us distinct from other schools but, taken together as a package, the fact that we are aware of these does make us distinct (Colson, 2004, p. 77).

Colson correctly observed that the prospectuses of the CoE schools, together with admissions policies, were another means of transmitting values which underpinned

the distinctiveness of the CoE schools. He also criticised the contents of some prospectuses for giving mission and ethos statements which were full of jargon with little or no explanation. He gave the following quotation as typical:

We will celebrate the student's individuality, enabling them to realise their worth as part of God's creation, encouraging them in their spiritual growth (Colson, 2001).

This extract provided little in terms of the nature and purpose of the school and whether it was distinctive from a secular school. The content appeared to be exclusive to those who presumably understood such jargon, which probably were very few. While it was not an entirely fair representation of the CoE schools, it did little to promote such schools as contributing to tolerance in society. Colson also regarded a church-affiliation criterion in the schools' admissions policies as making them less inclusive. While Colson was correct in his assessment of church schools' prospectuses and their contents, he was incorrect to conclude that the CoE schools were less inclusive. There is evidence to indicate that the pupil intake of the CoE schools *were* inclusive (see Section 6:3:4). The review of empirical studies of the CoE schooling in England identified the lack of such studies at a time of national debate about the nature and role of church schools and the extent to which they contributed to an intolerant society. The limited studies also concentrated on headteachers and their role as the embodiment of the distinctive Christian values that underpinned the CoE schools. Furthermore, with the exception of the Dearing Report, the fieldwork behind the studies selected for review was too small to justify any generalised conclusions. However, it was clear from the review that the

distinctiveness of the CoE schools had been perceived as depending mainly on the headteachers and the staff exhibiting Christian values. This review has also shown the need for more research in the area of church schools' own understanding of their nature and role in relation to the church. Such studies would need to adopt different methodologies in conjunction with substantial fieldwork. This present study was therefore an attempt to embark on such a project in order to contribute to the current debate in England. The next section reviews selected empirical studies on RC schooling in England.

#### **4.4 Investigation into Roman Catholic schooling**

In his review of previous research studies on RC schooling in England and Wales, Grace (2002) noted that the USA provided the largest data source and range of theoretical concepts and specific examples for researchers examining RC schooling in various cultural settings. He pointed out that most, if not all, of the previous research studies in English-speaking nations, including England and Wales, followed either foundational or preferential-option or school-effectiveness themes identified by Convey (1992). The foundational research theme examined the influence of RC schooling upon the religious development and attitudes of young people (Greeley and Rossi, 1966; Greeley et al., 1976; Greeley, 1998). Preferential-option research, on the other hand, examined the extent to which RC schools provided service to inner cities, poor communities and ethnic groups in difficult conditions, and to alienated and troubled youth (Vitullo-Martin, 1979; Cibulka et al., 1982; Greeley, 1982; O'Keefe, 1996, cited in Grace, 2000). School-effectiveness research explored the effectiveness

of RC schools in terms of their organisational characteristics necessary for high cognitive and academic achievement (Grace, p. 81). Following the identified themes, Grace (ibid.) reviewed the available research on RC schooling in England and Wales. However, he soon agreed with Arthur (1995) that empirical research studies on RC schooling in England and Wales were underdeveloped. Arthur (ibid.) wrote:

The main difficulty for any study of Roman Catholic education is to overcome the paucity of scholarly critical literature in the area (p. 225).

Grace noted that, with the exception of an early contribution of Brothers (1964), only Hornsby-Smith (1978, 1987, 1991, and 2000) had provided a systematic sociological analysis of RC culture and schooling in general in England and Wales. The lack of fieldwork research studies, especially on the rationale of RC schooling in England (foundational theme), may explain the current public scepticism of RC and church schooling in England. Grace cited the absence of RC higher-education institutions with an active research culture as the possible cause for the underdeveloped state of research into RC education in England and Wales. Grace also noted Arthur's work, 'The Ebbing Tide: Policy and Principles of Catholic Education' (Arthur, 1995) in which Arthur concluded that RC schools were losing their distinctive mission in England and Wales. Arthur identified the cause of the problem as the RC bishops' lack of leadership in relation to the distinctive values of RC education. He referred particularly to the 1980s and 1990s as the period when the leadership was poor since education in England and Wales underwent fundamental policy changes. This apparent failure of leadership and direction, from Arthur's perspective, had resulted in a lack of unity of purpose and direction among RC schools in England and Wales.

The fact that Arthur blamed the RC bishops for the supposed lack of unity of purpose and direction indicated that bishops played a big role in defining the nature and mission of RC schools. It also suggested their role in determining the schools' place both in the RC Church mission and in the maintained school system in England. It also raised the question as to the extent to which RC schools operated independently of the RC Church and its bishops. Arthur's underlying assumption was that RC schools had become indistinguishable from the non-Roman Catholic and Local Education Authority (LEA) schools (Arthur, p. 253). This raised the question of the nature and role (rationale) of RC schools. Arthur identified three models - holistic, dualistic and pluralistic - for RC schools and asserted that a distinctively RC school should follow the holistic model. This model recognised and established its priority as the transmission of the RC faith, providing an ethos in which awareness of the faith permeated all aspects of school life, its pedagogy and its curriculum. Arthur further argued that the holistic model of RC schooling was in decline, and had been largely replaced by dualistic and pluralistic models. The dualistic model drew a distinction between secular and religious aims, whereas the pluralistic model set out to accept the followers of other faiths into RC institutions (Arthur, 1995). One of the implications of Arthur's perception of RC schools was that the bishops needed to provide leadership that would maintain the distinctiveness of RC schools, and such leadership would largely depend on adoption of the holistic model.

Several issues emerged from Arthur's view. First, the holistic model of a RC school ran the risk of becoming a 'secret garden' or an exclusive club. Second, the

maintenance of the model could take RC schools back to the years prior to the reforms of Vatican II in which they operated in isolation. Third, it suggested that Christian values were only transmissible in a particular type of RC school, namely, one based on the holistic model. Fourth, the idea that Gospel values worked only in holistic schools provided ammunition for those critics of RC schools who demanded their removal from the maintained system. However, Arthur's supporters saw a consistency between Arthur (1995) and Egan (1988). Egan had previously concluded that RC schools were undergoing a process of incorporation into mainstream education by adopting the dualistic and pluralist models. This, she had argued, undermined the contribution of distinctively RC faith to the education of young people. Boylan (1996), however, in reviewing Arthur's findings, argued that Arthur's, and, for that matter, Egan's findings, reflected past RC schools, and were not characteristic of modern RC schools. He wrote: 'There are many Catholic schools in many parts of the country which shine like beacons in witness of their work for the young church'. Thus Boylan took the view that to restrict the distinctiveness of RC schools to Arthur's holistic model undermined the RC Church' educational aims, and the new openness advocated by Vatican II (1965). Grace also noted that both Arthur's and Egan's studies were based on small-scale fieldwork. For example, he rightly pointed out that the scale of Arthur's fieldwork was too small, and was restricted to only one county (Oxfordshire) in England. He wrote:

In the absence of more extensive fieldwork research in the foundational sector of Roman Catholic schooling in England and Wales, the whole question of the integrity of the Roman Catholic distinctiveness of the schools remains at the level of claim and counterclaim (Grace, 2002).



Grace argued that such small-scale investigations restricted the extent to which they could be used to make generalisations about the contemporary integrity and vitality of Roman Catholicity in RC schools in England and Wales. To this end, Grace (2002) conducted a relatively extensive enquiry as a contribution to the debate regarding the extent of Roman Catholicity in pluralistic RC schools – those with RC and non-RC pupils. He noted a huge gap in fieldwork research in the preferential sector of RC schooling in England and Wales. Mary Hickman (1995) had concentrated on the effectiveness of RC education for the Irish, but failed to examine the effectiveness of RC education in England and Wales. Moreover, Grace (2002) pointed out that Hickman's work was fundamentally different from the work done in the USA by Cibulka et al. (1982), Greeley (1982) and O'Keeffe (1996). The work of such researchers had been concerned with monitoring relationships between RC schools and communities disadvantaged by class and ethnic locations in contemporary settings, whereas Hickman sought to investigate the deep historical relations between the RC Church, its schools and the large population of working-class Irish immigrants living in the United Kingdom. This showed the need for an extensive enquiry into RC schools' provision of service to poor and pluralistic communities in England. This perceived need was consistent with O'Keeffe's (1992) observation, as expressed in the following quotation:

The demographic changes which have taken place in British society are manifested in all aspects of British life including the pupil population of Roman Catholic schools ... Roman Catholic schools face the need for development of good practice in multicultural education, the adoption of anti-racist stances and the demands of a multi-faith intake (pp. 42-3 in Grace, p. 105)

The need for RC schools to engage in multicultural education challenges Arthur's view that only RC schools based on the holistic model could serve the RC educational mission. In fact, O'Keeffe's main argument was that the church's insistence upon the holistic model for RC schools in order to realise its educational aims had effectively delayed its response to the implications of the various forms of pluralism for RC schools in England. The shift of emphasis of a church school from the nature and purpose of Man in relation to God to safeguarding its denominational character undermined its ability to make a distinctive contribution to society. Grace highlighted the work of Morris (1997), who investigated the possibility that different models of RC schools might produce different academic and religious outcomes. Morris used a case study of two RC secondary schools, one committed to the traditional/holistic model and the other to the progressive/pluralistic model. Morris concluded that the ethos of the traditional or holistic school seemed to produce a more satisfactory academic and religious outcome than did that of the progressive school. Such a conclusion raised several questions, such as the nature of a satisfactory outcome and the criteria for making such an assessment. The schools studied by Morris clearly differed in type, each being intended to achieve a particular outcome. Grace recognised this difficulty and sounded a note of caution in interpreting Morris' work. He also pointed out the difference in emphasis in the teaching approaches of the two types of schools (p. 106) which made comparison difficult if not impossible. Grace's review of research studies of RC schools in England and Wales confirmed the underdeveloped state of research studies into RC schools in these countries and in the United Kingdom as a whole. However, he recognised that there was an emerging

series of systematic empirical research studies of RC schools in England and Wales, to which he sought to contribute with his work 'Catholic schools: Mission, Markets and Morality' (2002). Grace's adopted method for data collection is described in Table 4:1. He noted the formal mission for RC schools outlined in a series of published statements by the Vatican as: Congregation for Catholic education 1977, 1982, 1988, and 1998. Grace produced a summary of these Congregations for RC Education as follows:

- education in the faith (as part of the saving mission of the Church)
  - preferential option for the poor (to provide educational services to those most in need)
  - formation in solidarity and community (to live in community with others)
  - education for the common good (to encourage common effort for the common good)
  - academic education for service (knowledge and skills for both employability and the continuance of God's purpose for his creation)
- (p.125)

This formal RC mission statement for RC schools refuted the view that such schools were divisive and undermined social cohesion. In order to establish whether or not individual RC schools subscribed to the formal RC education mission statement, Grace analysed the mission statements of a sample of sixty RC schools in his study in order to generate some answers to the question posed. Analysis of these mission statements highlighted the nature of the RC schools' understanding or perceptions of their mission priorities. Looking at the discourse employed in the mission statements, Grace categorised his findings as faith mission, academic mission, and social mission, to which the discussion now turns for examination of these findings in more detail. The published mission statements of Grace's sample schools stated explicitly the faith

mission of RC education. However, variations contained in the statements indicated that individual schools emphasised their own mission priorities. There were schools whose mission statements showed their mission as to connect pupils with the RC Church. Readers of such prospectuses could conclude that the schools in question sought to maintain and enhance the distinctive culture of Roman Catholicism. Such attitudes were evident from the following extracts:

The main aim of the school is to educate the pupils in accordance with the principles of the Roman Catholic Faith (Grace, p. 126).

This is a Roman Catholic comprehensive school and the teaching is according to the doctrines of the Church (Grace, p. 126).

Another group of schools, although they emphasised their connection with the RC Church, used a particular form of statement indicating that they encouraged pupils (i) to make a Christian commitment and (ii) to adhere to the Gospel values in their relationship with the world. These schools emphasised Christian rather than specifically RC education in a community perceived as Christian. The following extracts from mission statements typify the approach of such schools:

Our task is to interpret for today's generation the meaning of the gospel in their lives, sharing with them eternal values, opening up to them a vision of a wider, better world...and to understand more fully their role in working to establish a new order in the world (Grace, pp. 127-8)

We will provide a Christian education for all pupils based on the teaching of Jesus and the Spirit of the Gospels. The whole of the life of the school will be determined by the Gospel values of love and justice (Grace, p. 127)

Our main criterion is personal worth. In doing this we prepare young people to be a positive influence in the places where they live and work with others (Grace, p. 131).

There was another group of RC schools mainly located in multi-ethnic and multi-faith communities which, while stressing their RC status, adopted a sensitive approach to promoting an understanding between themselves and different groups within their communities:

We aim to enrich pupils' understanding of the Roman Catholic faith and to cultivate respect and understanding for other religious traditions (Grace, p. 128)

To maintain our own Christian tradition and practice while recognising the importance of fostering understanding and respect for other cultures, traditions and faiths (Grace, p. 128).

Articulating their mission in this way showed how such RC schools sought to uphold their Christian mission and to accept and respect other religious viewpoints contrary to theirs. Thus while such RC schools maintained their right to proclaim their distinctive faith, they also accepted that other people might have different faiths with which they could not necessarily agree with or of which they would not necessarily approve. This emphasis made RC schools more than just places for acquiring academic qualifications. Grace found a strong indication in the language used in the schools' mission statements that academic achievement was a means of Christian service to self and to the glorification of God, as is evidenced by the following extracts:

The school seeks to enable its pupils to reach their maximum potential in all areas of the curriculum, using their talents to the greater glory of God (Grace, 2002, p. 131).

...To teach pupils through Christ's own teaching and through the advancement of knowledge, to understand God and humanity better (ibid., p. 132).

Grace found evidence that education in RC schools catered for the whole person including their social well-being. The following extracts show how the RC schools were committed to pupils' social well-being and to social responsibility:

...to provide a school environment where justice is a key value in all our learning and relationships ... encouraging the sharing of resources, material goods and personal talents, working on racist attitudes as they manifest themselves (ibid., p. 133)

Since we are part of a multicultural, multi-racial society, all pupils should be educated towards an understanding of, and commitment to, that society, and every effort should be made to secure the elimination of racism (ibid., p. 133).

The above extracts appear to justify Arthur's view that there was nothing distinctive about the social mission of RC schools compared to other comparable public institutions, since similar denominational and LEA schools expressed similar sentiments. This raised the question of whether RC schools' distinctiveness depended on being different in their social mission from secular schools. As Chapter Six of this study will show, RC schools did not need to be different in their social mission to be distinctively Christian schools. Grace confirmed this view by asserting that the distinctiveness of RC schools' social mission was based on the teaching of Christ, Gospel values, papal statements and other church pronouncements (p. 134). Grace also analysed the responses of the sixty headteachers in his study in relation to their individual understanding of the mission of RC Church schools. He identified three dominant patterns in the approaches of headteachers as crucial to their perception of the educational mission of RC Church schools. First, the headteachers recognised the vocational nature of their leadership. The implication was that the headteachers

accepted the renewal and development of the RC faith among pupils as their individual responsibility. The following extracts are typical expression of the headteachers' conceptions of church schools' mission.

The question is what have you personally got to bring and the answer is ... one's own relationship with Christ ... to be a role model where it is quite clear that one's own beliefs and practices are firmly rooted in the teachings of Christ and built on a prayer life, not neglected because of the 'busyness' (Grace, p. 135).

I saw teaching as a vocation. It was on a par, believe it or not, with going into the priesthood ... I have always taught in Roman Catholic schools ... I think it's an enormous challenge to actually spread the Faith in a community like this (ibid., p. 135).

Second, the concept of vocation led to a commitment to teach and serve in particular social areas. Thus a headteacher's individual commitment to teaching in, for example, a deprived area indicated his or her willingness to be a vehicle for God's love to be conveyed to some disadvantaged pupils, as is evident from the following extracts:

I wanted to teach in an inner city. This was my mission and I asked the Order if I could teach in an inner city school ... I saw this as an area where staffing would always be a problem. I said, 'We as Sisters should be teaching in an area where lay people don't want to go' (Grace, p. 137).

My personal vision for this school is service. I see that the school is here to serve the young people of this area ... to make them feel important, valued as members of society ... and then to give them values, to give them a sense of what is right and of what is wrong ... This is one of the most deprived areas in Europe (Grace, p. 137).

Third, the commitment of the headteachers to deprived areas was largely based on their individual past experience. The individual personal or Christian experience of

the headteachers motivated them to help socially-deprived children to achieve the best possible academic results. This was expressed as follows:

Lots of our children come from very disadvantaged homes. My vision is to ensure that we raise achievement levels so that our youngsters can find their way out of the poverty trap and experience a better life. I was fortunate to go to a good school. I came from a poor family myself and it was through the education process that I did better ... I believe that Roman Catholic education, Roman Catholic schools can make a profound difference because our vision is very clear ... it points to the twin philosophies of raising achievement and promoting Gospel values (Grace, p. 140).

The headteachers' conception of the RC educational mission enabled them to eliminate any trace of autocracy from their leadership style. The implication of this was that the headteachers saw strong leadership as inconsistent with dominance and executive direction. By contrast, they identified strong leadership with commitment of purpose, clarity of vision and strength of character (p. 146). This conception of leadership among the headteachers was incompatible with Ofsted's preferred leadership style, as expressed by one headteacher in the terms below.

The use of language by OFSTED gives an implication that to be effective as a leader you need to be almost tough or macho. I don't actually think that's the case. I think leadership is essentially about having a vision of where you are going and having the ability to communicate that vision (Grace, p. 146).

Thus strong leadership is to possess the ability to employ an appropriate style of leadership when necessary. Such a leadership style requires purposefulness, clarity, resilience, optimism and moral courage. Grace pointed out that the headteachers were able to exercise this kind of leadership because they had the appropriate personal



spiritual wealth - 'spiritual capital.' Grace maintained that spiritual capital served as a source of empowerment for the headteachers because it involved a transcendental impulse to guide them in making judgements and taking action in the everyday world. This spiritual capital of the headteachers interviewed, he argued, came from their own RC school experience, a family background of prayer and regular attendance at Mass, a current prayer life and religious practice, and professional opportunities for development and reflection on the spiritual context of RC schools (Grace, 2002). The headteachers with spiritual capital acted both as professionals and as witnesses in their leadership roles. In this respect, such headteachers were beneficial to RC schools because by this means they were able to maintain and to enhance the RC educational mission. Grace noted how the majority of RC school leaders drew on their spiritual capital to discern a way forward and to provide leadership on the educational policies and practices in their schools. Their personal understanding of the fundamental principles of the RC faith and its associated moral and value positions enabled them to maintain the integrity of the mission of RC schools in the face of the many external pressures which could have compromised that integrity.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

This chapter has attempted to review and critically comment on some relevant research studies on the CoE and RC schools in England since 2001. The review has identified the mission of the church as one of engaging in evangelism including the following:

- to proclaim the Gospel
- to create a favourable environment for people to appreciate and respond to the Gospel
- to nurture those who have responded to the proclaimed Gospel.

The church, based on its conception of mission, perceived the schools as providing a favourable Christian environment for pupils to have an opportunity to explore the Gospel, and to exercise choice in either accepting or rejecting the proclaimed Gospel. Thus the church's conception of mission affects its perception of the nature and mission of its schools as:

1. A place for discovering a particular vision of humanity in relation to God.
2. A place for preparing human beings to be stewards of God's creation.

This perception implied that the church schools could share a similar, if not the same, vision with the church in order to play the role defined for them within the mission of the church. The review has also identified the church's emphasis on headteachers as embodying the values which made church schools distinctive. However, there was little or no information in the published research studies to show that individual church schools actually understood their nature and mission as conceived by the church. It was nevertheless clear in the review that the research methods adopted for the selected research studies made it difficult to establish church schools' own perception of their nature and mission. The data for the findings were collected through interviews with experts on church schools, pupils and parents and so on. This entertained the possibility that the participants in the research studies could have had preconceptions of the nature and mission adopted by the schools. While the

methods employed in the studies were acceptable and appropriate for their particular purposes, they failed to generate answers to the question of church schools' own understanding of their nature and mission in the church. This shortcoming demonstrated the need for a different research approach: one which could enable the exploration of church schools' conception of their nature and mission in their public documents such as the schools' prospectuses compiled by the individual schools' governors and the Senior Management Teams. Thus there was a gap in the empirical research studies which needed to be filled in order to gain a deeper insight into this aspect of church schooling. This study was initiated to examine a number of the CoE and RC schools' prospectuses in an attempt to generate answers for the questions raised by this review.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

## **5.1 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to attempt to establish church schools' own understanding of their nature and role in the mission of the church, as expressed in their own public documents, such as prospectuses.

## **5.2 Research questions**

The literature survey (Chapter Three) and the review of research studies (Chapter Four) on church schools in England since 2001 have revealed a gap concerning church schools' own understanding of their nature and mission. This gap raised a significant number of questions for this research to attempt to address. For example:

- How did church schools understand and express their nature and role in the mission of the Church?
- Were the identified and expressed nature and mission of church schools compatible with liberal education theory?
- How did the identified and expressed nature and mission of church schools contribute, if at all, to intolerance in English society?

## **5.3 Choice of research method**

The above questions required a method that identified and interpreted church schools' understanding of their nature and mission as presented in their own public documents. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods was chosen as the most appropriate means of obtaining answers to the above questions. The answers obtained should enhance the understanding of teachers, school governors, pupils, and parents about the distinctive nature and mission of church schools and their significance for wider English society. Using the chosen method facilitated close examination of church schools' 'words...and records' to gain a better understanding of them (Maykut

and Morehouse, 1994, p.17). Looking closely at church schools' 'words...and records' involved a close and a repeated reading of eighty church schools' prospectuses equally divided between the CoE and RC schools. There is a crucial relationship between qualitative and quantitative research which could affect their use in this and any study. The relationship between the practitioners of both methods has been exposed as follows:

Qualitative researchers are more likely than quantitative researchers to confront the constraints of the everyday social world. They see this world in action and embed their findings in it (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 10).

This stated relationship highlights the apparent tension between two groups of researchers. While the qualitative researchers accuse quantitative researchers of isolating variables and failing to examine them 'in context,' quantitative researchers, accuse qualitative researchers of failing to generate objective evidence. The claim and the counterclaim of the two sets of researchers clearly reveal the differences between the two approaches (Hammersley, 1992), and raise the question as to whether the two methods are mutually exclusive. Denscombe (1998) endeavoured to answer the question in the following terms:

In practice, the approaches are *not* mutually exclusive. Social researchers rarely, if ever, rely on one approach to the exclusion of the other. Good research tends to use parts of both approaches, and the difference lies in the *degree* to which the research is based on one camp or the other (p. 173).

In what follows, it should be clear that the present researcher tried to follow Denscombe's counsel by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. It was

decided to make a ‘survey’ the strategy for collecting the data for this study, for reasons consistent with Denscombe (1998, p. 6), as follows: a survey would (i) carry the idea that the research had a wide coverage; (ii) attempt to provide a snapshot of how things were at the specific time at which the data were collected; and (iii) involve the idea of looking ‘out there’ so as purposefully seek the necessary information. This strategy facilitated a broad overview of the different perceptions and conceptions of the nature and mission in church schools. The use of survey or the idea of going ‘out there’ gives the impression of physical interaction between a researcher and different people through such methods as interviews, observations, questionnaires and so on. However, in this study, documents were used for the collection of data making any such physical interaction impossible. This amounted to a different kind of interaction between the authors of the documents and the researcher. Denscombe explained the use of documents thus:

Quite apart from the literature review, there is another way in which documentary sources can be used for research. Rather than act as introduction to the research they can take on a central role as the actual thing that is to be investigated. In this sense, documents can be treated as a source of data in their own right - in effect an alternative to questionnaires, interviews or observation (pp.158-159).

#### **5.4 Selection of sample schools**

One of the main difficulties in using documents as a source of data was the selection of appropriate schools for analysis. There were four thousand, two hundred and eighty church schools with VA status in England in 2003 (DFES, 2003). Table 5:1 summarises different denominational primary and secondary schools in England in 2003.

**Table 5:1**

**Number of Church schools in England (2003)**

<u>Denomination</u> Category	CoE	Roman Catholic	Other	Category Total	% of grand total church schools
Primary	2005	1724	0	3729	87.1
Secondary	197	352	2	551	12.9
Total	2202	2076	2	4280	100.0
Percentage %	51.4	48.5	0.1	100.0	

**(Source: DFES (2003) Statistics of Education)**

It would have been impossible for the prospectuses of all the maintained church primary and secondary schools in England to have been examined in this study. A decision was made to concentrate solely on secondary schools, in order to reduce the number of schools and their prospectuses for this study. The decision to concentrate on secondary schools was made because the Dearing Report recommended an expansion in the number of church schools of this type, and hence future controversy concerning desirability or otherwise of church schools may well become focussed upon schools of this type. The selection of church schools was also made in such a way that the chosen sample could be regarded as being statistically representative of the population as a whole, so that ‘what is found in that portion applies equally to the rest of the “population”’ (Denscombe, 1998, p. 11). In order to select a representative sample of church schools, it was necessary to establish criteria for determining which schools were appropriate. The following criteria were therefore used to select the church schools:

1. Initially, all the CoE schools in the Inner and Outer London LEAs were selected.



2. The selected CoE schools were paired with an equal number of Roman Catholic schools in the LEA. The pairing of schools enabled like-for-like comparison in order to generate answers to the questions posed in this research. Where there were no Roman Catholic schools to pair with the CoE schools, both the CoE and LEA schools were de-selected. This criterion was crucial in order to ensure the selection of church schools serving in approximately the same areas.
3. Where the number of RC schools exceeded the number of the CoE schools, the following criteria were adopted in the order listed below to enable a like-for-like comparison:
  - School size – number on roll
  - Percentage of pupils achieving five or more grades A\* - C at General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations
  - Percentage of pupils in receipt of free school meals (FSM)
  - Percentage of pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN )
  - Percentage of truancies

The use of these criteria identified twenty-three LEAs spread over ten Inner and thirteen Outer London locations, with forty CoE, forty RC and forty LEA schools<sup>24</sup>.

The use of the above criteria raised the question of the extent of the researcher's role in the pursuance of this study emerged. This question stemmed from the fact that the researcher set out the details of the criteria for selection of a sample of secondary schools in order to answer specified questions. In dealing with this matter, it may be helpful to state that the researcher was an evangelical Christian Methodist minister and a qualified religious education (RE) teacher with teaching experience in both church and LEA secondary schools in England. It was possible that the researcher's personal perception and values helped to shape this research to some extent. On a few occasions, the researcher's status as a Methodist minister facilitated access to particular documents, and on other occasions it hindered access. For example, one headteacher denied access to the researcher to the school's trust deed until an official

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<sup>24</sup> See Appendix E for the list of schools selected with the criteria set out in Section 5:4.

letter confirming the researcher's status as a Methodist minister was produced. Of course, the researcher's status as an evangelical Christian Methodist minister could have no influence on the documents that had been used as sources for this study, but it might have influenced the researcher's reading, understanding, and selection of key texts. There were some built-in safeguards, such as the independence of the prospectuses and the Ofsted inspection reports, which ensured that the data correctly represented the selected church schools. Furthermore, the selected documents were already in the public domain and, as the next few paragraphs will show, a pilot study was conducted to ensure that the selected documents were fit for purpose.

### **5.5 Pilot study**

Maxim (1999, p. 131) claimed that 'conducting a pilot study is no guarantee of success; however, not doing one is a harbinger of failure.' This researcher took the counsel of Maxim and conducted a pilot study to find answers to the following questions:

- Were the selected documents readily available and accessible?
- What special permission was required to obtain access to some or all of the documents?
- What was the appropriate method for collecting the selected documents?
- How would the documents be analysed?
- Would the information from the data answer the research questions?
- Would further documents be required in order to generate answers to the research questions?
- What other difficulties might be encountered for using the selected document, and what might be the ethical problems?

The collection and examination of data for the pilot study took nine months, from May 2003 to January 2004, to complete. The adopted criteria for selecting schools (Section 5.4) were used to select a sample of five CoE, five RC and five LEA schools. The selection of the five LEA schools was to enable comparison between them and church schools. In order to select the above fifteen schools, an Internet search engine was used to search and to identify church and LEA schools in a particular LEA area. The Internet search of this LEA area found five CoE, eight RC and eleven LEA schools which totalled twenty-four schools. Number three of the criteria for selecting schools for this study were used for the refinement as set out in Table 5:2.

**Table 5:2**  
**Sample schools for the pilot study**

CoE	Roman Catholic	LEA
St Margaret	Sacred Heart of Mary	Densbury Park
St Thomas	Trinity High	Nightingale's Community
St Saviour's (Girls)	St Gregory	Parklands Community
Archbishop Tenison	Campion	Broadgreen Community
St Andrew's High	The Holy Family	Auckland

The internet search engine was also used to explore whether the required documents of the schools were available and accessible on the Internet. The outcome was both instructive and helpful for the entire study. The search found three RC, two CoE and three LEA schools with up-to-date information on their individual schools' websites. Two CoE schools had websites with outdated information (1999) and one RC school with little information. The remaining two church schools (a CoE and a RC) and two

LEA schools had no websites. The schools were approached by both telephone and e-mail to request their current prospectuses. The three CoE and two LEA schools posted their current prospectuses to the researcher without any questions. The remaining two RC schools failed to respond to the request. The request was followed up with a further telephone call which led to one of the two schools sending its prospectus. The remaining school wrote to explain that it could not send its prospectus because the researcher resided outside its catchment areas. A further telephone call and an e-mail to explain the purpose of the request still bore no fruit. However, the researcher telephoned another RC school within the same LEA with an explanation of its purpose and a guarantee of anonymity. A prospectus arrived in the post to the researcher two days later. Two lessons were learned from this pilot study concerning the adopted strategy for collecting information from the selected schools. First, the Internet was not sufficient for gathering the required information, and there was a need either for sending letters or e-mails or making telephone calls or sending faxes to request for current prospectuses. Second, there was a need to ensure that selected schools were fully aware of the reason for the requested prospectuses, and a guarantee of anonymity in respect of any future reference to the schools in the study. Based on this, decision was made to use pseudonyms for all the participating schools in order to protect their identity. Pseudonyms are used of all the schools in this study.

## **5.6 Examination of information available for the pilot study**

The individual prospectuses were repeatedly read and re-read. Words, phrases and sentences were highlighted or underlined; notes were taken to identify any emerging topics or patterns. The detailed reading of the prospectuses demonstrated the researcher's determination to analyse the documents with no 'predetermined categories or strict observational checklists' (Marshall and Rossman, 1995, p. 79). Klemperer (1998) commented on the significance of paying attention to details in the following terms:

It is not the big things that are important but the everyday life of tyranny, which gets forgotten. A thousand mosquito bites are worse than a blow to the head. I observe, note down the mosquito bites (Klemperer, 1998).

The attention to detail enabled identification of regularities and patterns which helped to reduce and to simplify the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994). The following were the themes that emerged from the examination of the prospectuses: School location, mission statements, curriculum, religious education, pastoral care, discipline, collective worship, Sex education, and extra-curricular activities and admissions policy. A further examination was made to establish the extent to which the identified patterns contributed to, or influenced, these church schools' understanding of their nature and role in the mission of the church. In the course of the examination, it became abundantly clear that the prospectuses would be better understood by referring to the preceding chapters and Ofsted and Section 23 reports of Schools Inspection Act 1996.

This led to the conclusion that these church schools failed to provide any clear statement of their own understanding of their nature and mission within the church in their prospectuses. Thus it established the need to consult other church published documents to interpret church schools' understanding of their nature and mission as they might be derived from their prospectuses. In order to attempt such an interpretation, this researcher drew on Usher and Scott's (1996, p. 277) view on the interpretation of texts, as expressed in the following quotation:

Interpretation is not simply a matter of 'reading out' a meaning that is already there. Rather, meaning is read into the data and this is not simply a matter of elucidating it by applying neutral techniques. Interpretation is a social act and the meaning that is read into the data is dependent on the paradigms and research traditions within which the researcher is located. It is this which makes the researcher the 'great interpreter' with privileged access to meaning.

By using a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methods for this study, the researcher was able to ascertain the authors of the prospectuses' perceived understanding, and thus to interpret their words. The attempt to read into the authors perceived understanding implied two things: (a) that the interpretation of qualitative research data was subjective and narrow; and (b) that it was opened to challenge and criticism from other researchers. It was possible that individual schools, diocesan education directors (DED) and other researchers in this field might challenge the interpretations offered for the prospectuses investigated in this study. However, such a challenge would be unlikely to invalidate the interpretations offered in this study for two reasons: (i) the examination and interpretation were designed to answer specific questions and; (ii) decision was made to explore particular themes at the expense of

others, based on the personal experience of the researcher and some specific factors prevalent at the time of this study (Section 1.2); and (iii) the researcher always related the data and their examination to the research questions, literature and empirical research studies discussed in the preceding chapters. By relating the examination of the prospectuses to the discussion given in the previous chapters, the researcher was able to revisit the historical, philosophical and theoretical ideas that underpinned this study. This process was sustained and applied throughout the examination and the interpretation of the data. The next section provides a summary of the findings of the pilot study, and discusses their implication for the overall study.

### **5.7 A summary of findings of the pilot study**

The examination of the prospectuses and other published documents of the church identified church schools' understanding of their nature as denominational, voluntary-aided and comprehensive. The following extracts are typical expressions of the schools in their prospectuses:

Welcome to St Peter's Catholic voluntary-aided comprehensive school  
(Roman Catholic school, 2002/3)

St Augustine is a Voluntary Aided Church of England, Comprehensive  
School (C of E school, 2002/3)

However, little evidence was found to establish the implications of the schools understanding of their nature in these terms. In order to establish the implication of the schools perceived understanding of their nature, the individual schools mission

statements were examined. In the following quotation, Grace (2002) explains the significance of using mission statements to understand schools' nature and mission:

[Mission statements] constitute a principled and comprehensive charter of what a school claims to be its distinctive educational, spiritual, moral and social purposes. Such statements characteristically specify a range of desired educational outcomes. They are published to the community as a statement saying 'this is what the school is about' and implicitly saying 'this is the basis upon which you can judge us (p. 226).

The implication was that church schools' mission statements outlined their perceived nature, mission and methods for achieving their specified objectives. The following are typical statements:

The mission of our school, rooted in our common life as a worshipping Christian community, is to educate the whole person so that everyone may find the keys to become all that God has uniquely put it within them to be (CoE school, 2002/3)

Our school exists to give witness to the way of life preached by Christ and taught by the Catholic Church. We are a worshipping community; We meet the learning needs of individual pupils, We develop to the utmost the potential of each member of the school community, We make students aware of their active role in shaping the future of our school community and the community of the wider world (Roman Catholic school, 2002/3)

We intend our school to be a worshipping community of faith where Christian beliefs and values are nurtured (CoE school, 2002/3)

The school aims to assist parents in fulfilling their obligation to educate their children in accordance with the principles and teachings of the Roman Catholic Church (Roman Catholic school, 2002/3).

These extracts express the assumptions of both the CoE and the RC Church schools. The CoE schools' statement emphasised a Christian community underpinned by Christian beliefs and values. This implied that the school accepted pupils with broadly Christian values, irrespective of their religious denomination, and



endeavoured to nurture those values. This view was consistent with the CoE's historical claim to being the nation's teacher in matters of faith and morals. However, the validity of this historical claim should be dependent on the criteria used to admit pupils to the school. The RC school, on the other hand, assumed a community of pupils who shared or subscribed to the RC faith. This assumption implied exclusion of pupils perceived as Christians but not Roman Catholics. This understanding identified a fundamental difference between the two denominations' educational philosophies. It was also a particular example of a fundamental difference in attitude between the two churches towards each other's church members. While the CoE school reflected the CoE's educational philosophy, the RC school alluded to the fundamental educational mission of the RC Church. The mission was that RC parents had a divine obligation to educate their children in the RC faith. This meant that the RC Church provided RC schools to help RC parents to fulfil their duty. Having examined the two sets of schools' statements of their educational missions, it became necessary to examine their admissions policies to ascertain the extent of historical influences on both the CoE and the RC schools. Examination of the sample schools' admissions policies showed that the schools subscribed to a particular denominational pattern. Both denominational schools gave priority to families able to demonstrate a commitment either to that particular denomination or, in the case of the CoE schools, to another Christian denomination. Baptism, evidenced by a certificate, and a recommendation from a minister or a priest was accepted as proof of Christian commitment. Acceptance of such a certificate as proof of Christian commitment raised the question as to whether infant baptism made one a Christian. This

requirement for prospective pupils to demonstrate their commitment to a Christian denomination or faith was one of the factors which had stimulated the debate in the literature concerning the extent to which church schools contributed to intolerance in society. However, using this requirement to accuse church schools as selective and divisive was unsustainable for the following reason. The examination of the LEA schools' prospectuses showed that the individual schools required pupils to demonstrate their residency in a particular designed catchment-area of the schools. This was in the form of post codes or how close applicants lived to particular schools. The point here is that the LEA schools imposed restrictions on pupils who could be admitted to particular schools. This showed that both church and LEA schools used, for them, what they perceived as appropriate criteria to select pupils to their respective schools. While the impact of the use of a church affiliation criterion and a catchment-area might not be the same, a case could be made that the underlying principle of selecting certain pupils to particular schools was the same. This showed that the use of a church-affiliation criterion and a school's catchment-area to select pupils were not in themselves discriminatory, although the adopted criteria might exclude some pupils from attending the schools. Moreover, both criteria did not discriminate on the basis of race, social class or ability. Based on this view, church schools could be said to be inclusive in the proper sense of the term. The emphasis on church-affiliation criterion clearly identified church schools as capable of offering an education which could be compatible with liberal education. This possibility could refute the claim of some humanist writers, such as Hirst and White, that the education offered by church schools was incompatible with liberal education. There was

evidence in the available data to challenge such writers on this point. The following mission statements of some of the sample schools demonstrate the schools' intention of providing an education based on Christian values with an emphasis that met the basic requirements of liberal education philosophy.

The school seeks to create in students an awareness of their abilities enabling them to realise their potential and to play their full part, as Christians, in the wider community in this country and overseas; to prepare them for the world of work and to develop within them interests which they will find enriching and fulfilling (CoE school, 2003/4).

St. Margaret is a Christian school serving a multi-ethnic community. The school exists to provide an excellent education in a disciplined, caring environment where each individual is valued and helped to achieve their full potential (Archbishop Tenison CoE School, 2003/4).

The school aims to uphold Christian belief through worship and daily life and to enable students to grow in a living faith. It also seeks to develop the habit and skills of academic enquiry, intellectual integrity, and a love of learning for its own sake (Campion RC School, 2003/4).

These extracts portray education through church schools as a combination of spiritual and academic development which include 'the habit and skills of academic enquiry.' This confirms McLaughlin's view that church schools developed pupils' autonomy through faith (McLaughlin, 1994), and therefore rendered any charge of indoctrination invalid. The liberal aspect of a church-school education was also emphasised in the schools' organisation of their curricula. The content and the delivery of the curriculum in all the fifteen sample schools followed the pattern established by the National Curriculum (NC). This meant the sample church schools shared the same curriculum as the LEA schools, so that the curriculum in Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) consisted of all the subjects of the NC and RE (Basic Curriculum), and in

Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11), consisting of the core subjects (English, Mathematics, Science and RE) and other optional subjects<sup>25</sup>. However, similarity between church and LEA schools ended at the respective emphases placed on the nature and role of RE and collective worship. The VA status of church schools meant that there was a denominational emphasis upon RE, which was taught as true in relation to the Christian faith. This denominational emphasis meant that RE played a major role in church schools' understanding of their nature and mission. Another emphasis in the curriculum concerned collective worship and discipline. It was therefore reasonable to question the extent to which RE and collective worship influenced the values underpinning church schools' distinctiveness. The sample church schools expected their pupils to study RE to examination level, and to use the opportunities offered by collective worship to reflect on the religious concepts they encountered in the subject.

All students follow a Religious Education programme throughout their time in the school and spend 10% of their curriculum time at worship or studying RE, in line with the advice of the Bishops' Conference (St Gregory RC School, 2003/4).

St Thomas is a Church school and Religious Education is an important part of our curriculum. An academic subject in its own right, it is also an integral part of each student's day, helping them to explore their understanding of God and to reflect on their relationship with him, each other, and the world they live in. All students study Religious Education to examination level (St Thomas CoE School, 2003/4).

These extracts demonstrate that RE and collective worship were regarded as crucial to church schools' understanding of their nature and purpose. They were seen to be a means of developing the Christian concept of God, Man and the world in a context where God is perceived as the basis of all wisdom (James 3:13-18). The significant

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<sup>25</sup> The optional subjects are listed in Appendix F.

role of RE in relation to the schools, teachers and pupils was summed up by one RC school as follows:

RE is of vital importance in the school. It gives purpose and meaning to the existence of the school and, in this sense, is the responsibility of all members of our school community... Pupils are helped to understand what being a Christian means in their everyday lives, at both personal and community levels. In every way, we try to create an environment in which pupils may develop a real relationship with Christ (Trinity High RC School, 2003/4).

RE was regarded as an opportunity for both staff and pupils to become community-orientated. It was therefore the responsibility of all members to teach and learn its implications for the schools and for individual pupils. This implied that RE determined the church schools' concept of discipline which was offered through their pastoral care. This explained the elevated status of pastoral care in the sample schools as one of their main distinctive features. Examination of the LEA schools' prospectuses also revealed the importance they gave to pastoral care and raised the question of the distinctiveness of pastoral care in church schools. At face value, pastoral care in both church and LEA schools followed a similar pattern, usually that of placing pupils into form-tutor groups. The form tutor had the responsibility of meeting the group daily for registration and tutorial activities, and of encouraging attendance at an assembly and an act of worship. The tutor also had to support and to monitor pupils daily on issues of punctuality, attendance, and conduct in class and around the school. However, the church schools' prospectuses emphasised the Christian values of love of, and faith in, God as underpinning their pastoral care which should confirm a fundamental difference between church and LEA schools.

The following typical extracts from the sample schools prospectuses should confirm this difference:

The aim of pastoral care is to enable pupils to grow and develop their Christian identity, helping people with spiritual formation and movement toward mature faith, hope, and love...Helping people to grow in their ability to love God, neighbour, and self (St Margaret CoE School, 2002/3).

Pastoral care at Trinity High brings the resources of faith to bear on the critical issue at hand. To deepen pupils' sense of the presence of God and facilitate openness to God's love (Campion RC School, 2002/3).

Pastoral care is a major strength of ...it is integrated into the form and year group structure so that academic progress is maximised by a consideration of individual well-being (Auckland LEA School, 2002/3).

The Christian values underpinning pastoral care in church schools focus on development of, and growth of, pupils' relationship with God. The implication of such a pastoral care system could and should identify Christian concept of a human being as being at the heart of the Christian education offered in church schools. This Christian concept takes the view that a human being is made in the image of God implying that individuals should be nurtured in this image. The values identified in the church-schools prospectuses as being Christian and needing nurturing, included a love of God through Christ, which inspired a respect for self, others and property. Discipline in the form of either a reward or a sanction was identified as being administered according to pupils' adherence to, or rejection of, the schools' Codes of Conduct and Behaviour respectively. Specific values, such as good work, honesty, effort, helpfulness, success and courage were highlighted as being encouraged in pupils who should be rewarded with either verbal or written praise (reward). In

contrast, disobedience, laziness, dishonesty, failure to do homework, vandalism, bullying, name-calling, racism, and other anti-social practices were identified as unacceptable in the schools' prospectuses. The punishment highlighted in the prospectuses as would be administered for the latter behaviour was noted to be one or more of the following: detention, being placed on-report, soliciting an apology, repairing the damage, and, in rare cases, temporary or permanent exclusion from the school. The prospectuses identified teachers, including headteachers, as those who should be responsible for seeing to it that the Gospel values such as respect for difference, equality of individuals, and appreciation of pupils' gifts and so on were communicated to all pupils. Examination of the disciplinary policies in the sample schools revealed their aim as the promotion of personal and social morality in pupils to create a Christian environment conducive to teaching and learning. This implied an introduction of the concepts of 'right' and 'wrong' in their behaviour. The two extracts below are typical examples of church schools' expression of the aims of their disciplinary policies:

Our aim is to assist the development of self-discipline and mature, responsible, Christian behaviour and relationships (St Gregory RC School, 2003/4).

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that we can provide a safe, orderly, and stimulating teaching and learning environment for all members of our community (St Saviour CoE School, 2003/4)

Based on the above extracts, the purpose of disciplinary policies in church schools should be to create an atmosphere that encouraged the formation of personal and social responsibility and to inculcate in pupils a sense of conscience, compassion and

a commitment to service. Thus the schools' disciplinary policies should encourage Christian growth and deeper relationships among pupils as God intends for humanity in general. The conclusion of the examination of the prospectuses was that church schools' apparent understanding of their nature as worshipping communities should enable Christian-based pastoral care leading to a well-disciplined and successful academic community. It was also found that both church and LEA schools claimed to offer their pupils opportunities to exercise the disciplined culture of their schools outside the classroom in the form of extra-curricular activities. The following lists of extra-curricular activities showed how certain skills could be acquired through such activities. First, activities such as theatre visits, school orchestra, wind band, string group and choir, performing arts evening, community work, student senate, drama club and productions and annual leavers' 'prom' should provide opportunities for the development of pupils' social skills necessary for preparing pupils to live in diverse communities in England and around the world. The second list of activities should provide opportunities for pupils to relate learning from the curriculum to experiences in the wider world. The list consisting of individual subjects field-trips, mathematics challenge, modern language exchange programmes, subject competitions, exhibitions, and writing for publication could enhance pupils' practical understanding of particular subjects. The third list of extra-curricular activities, such as inter-tutor group competitions, competitive sporting events: football, rugby, hockey, netball, basketball, cricket and athletics and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme should afford pupils opportunities to learn to be interdependent by working in teams, to compete and to appreciate differences between people, and the need to accept such



differences in building a tolerant society. Engagement in teamwork and in competitive activities should provide pupils with essential skills for living in a competitive world. It should also prepare pupils to learn to cope with the consequences of choice, with success and failure. Overall, extra-curricular activities should enable the formation of life-long skills and relationships which are essential for living in a tolerant society. However, the researcher could not confirm or deny the reality of the claims in the prospectuses in view of the adopted method for this study. Having said that, the list of activities identified were not exclusive to church schools because the examination of the LEA sample schools also revealed a similar list of activities. It was concluded that although extra-curricular activities were perceived in the prospectuses as optional in most of the schools, they could and should be essential tools for preparing pupils to live in and accept differences in a world full of differences. Two points could be made from this conclusion:

- The similarity between church and LEA schools' extra-curricular activities should confirm that church schools should not always have to be different from LEA schools to be distinctive. This could challenge Arthur's holistic model of Roman Catholic schooling (Section 4:4) which advocated that Roman Catholic schools' distinctiveness depended on the admission of wholly Roman Catholic pupils.
- Church schools should prepare pupils to live and work in a competitive world requiring interpersonal skills. Effectively, church schools should reject the accusation of being exclusive and discriminatory.

In conclusion, the pilot study showed that the distinctiveness of church schools should stem from their relationships with their respective denominations, and the Gospel values underpinning their nature and mission. The schools, based on the identified values, should be fit for purpose in a pluralist society for the following

reason: their admissions policies should enable them to draw pupils from diverse cultures, races, social classes and levels of ability. The distinctiveness of church schools should also stem from their understanding of being an integral part of the Christian worshipping community. The maintenance of such relationship with the church should involve the combination of (i) a high-quality education, underpinned by Christian values, and (ii) the opportunity to learn about the Christian faith through RE and to experience this faith through regular Christian worship.

### **5.8 Critique of the research method adopted**

It was apparent during the pilot study that the use of documents would pose fewer problems than other methods, such as the use of questionnaires, interviews, observations and case study. Several benefits of using documents as the source of data for this study also became apparent. For example, it was possible to embark on data collection from the outset of the study. It also enabled an investigation of a relatively large number of church schools. The required external documents, such as Section 23 and Ofsted inspection reports were conveniently available on the Internet and at the schools, making data collection less expensive and less time-consuming than would have been the case using other research methods. There was need for neither prior appointment nor authorisation or permission to access the schools' documents, except on those occasions when it was decided to approach some schools for further information. It also raised few ethical problems. However, a number of difficulties were encountered and these contributed to the outcome of the examination of the documents to some degree. First, there was the issue of the credibility and

validity of the documents which were readily available in the public domain. The system put in place to establish both the authenticity and credibility of the documents used the four basic criteria advocated by Platt (1981) and Scott (1990). Following them, it was necessary to ensure the following: (i) the origin and authorship of the documents (authenticity); (ii) the undistorted nature of the documents (credibility); (iii) the typicality of the documents (representativeness<sup>26</sup>); and (iv) the assessment of the documents (meaning). Second, there was another issue: whether or not the study relied on unfit sources by using schools' prospectuses whose contents were not purposely generated for this study. The answer to this question impinged on the fairness and objectiveness of the interpretation of the documents. Giddens (1976) pointed out that the meaning of the text of a particular document depended on the intentions of its author and the perspective of the reader. It followed from Giddens' assertion that any attempt to produce 'a single objective inner essential meaning' (Wellington, 2000) of a text in the prospectuses was resisted. For this reason, it was necessary to go beyond the literal meaning of the prospectuses to find a deeper understanding and interpretation of each text. This meant heeding the warning given by Wellington (ibid., p. 116) that the interpretation of a text of a document was a key to understanding a document rather than to look for an ideal meaning. He wrote as follows:

...no document should be accepted at face value, [but equally that] no amount of analysis will discover or decode a hidden, essentialist meaning. The key activity is one of interpretation rather than a search for, or discovery of, some kind of Holy Grail.

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<sup>26</sup> Representativeness refers to, as Scott (1990, p. 7) puts it, the 'general problem of assessing the typicality or otherwise of evidence.' However, Scott points out that a researcher does not always want or seek 'typical evidence.'

Based on this warning, the framework (listed below) suggested by Wellington (pp. 116-7) for analysing documents such as prospectuses was employed.

- When was the document written?
- Who wrote it and what was their bias?
- For whom was it written?
- Vested interests?
- Was it written to inform or to sell?
- What image does it portray?

The employment of this framework enabled engagement in a form of dialogue with the authors of the prospectuses so as to achieve a deeper meaning and interpretation. Thus there was a need to understand the background, the bias, the purpose of an author in order to understand a particular document. Scott (1990, p. 31) put it as follows:

Textual analysis involves mediation between the frames of reference of the researcher and those who produced the text. The aim of this dialogue is to move within the 'hermeneutic circle' in which we comprehend a text by understanding the frame of reference from which it was produced, and appreciate that frame of reference by understanding the text. The researcher's own frame of reference becomes the springboard from which the circle is entered, and so the circle reaches back to encompass the dialogue between the researcher and the text

This meant that no reliance was placed on secondary sources because this researcher engaged in dialogue with the authors of the prospectuses which enabled interpretation of their work objectively. Third, no attempt was made to establish first-hand relationships with participants, or to engage with the schools through interactions such as observations, questionnaires and interviews with staff and pupils, in order to experience the life of the school community. This was a significant shortcoming in

the research method. It was meant that aspirations expressed in the schools' prospectuses could neither be confirmed nor denied. However, the evidence of close encounters with schools was available in the Ofsted and Section 23 inspection reports from the sample schools. Notwithstanding the shortcomings of the research methods adopted for this investigation, it was believed that these methods were appropriate for the collection, examination and interpretation of the results used in the main part of this study and for the addressing of the questions to which answers were sought.

### **5.9 Collection of material for the main study**

The collection of the requisite public documents (prospectuses, Ofsted and Section 23 inspection reports) for the sample schools began in February 2004. The established criteria for the selection of school (Section 5:4) were used to select forty CoE, forty RC and forty LEA schools. The Internet search engines were used to ascertain the number of the selected schools that had up-to-date material and information on the Internet. The searches identified seventy-eight schools with up-to-date website information. Twenty-three schools had outdated websites, and nineteen of the schools had no websites at all. The information contained in the up-to-date websites was downloaded for examination. In the light of the lessons learned from the pilot study, the remaining schools were approached by means of e-mails, faxes and telephone calls in which the nature and purpose of this study was explained and prospectuses requested. Forty-two schools in all were approached of which sixteen were CoE, eleven were RC and fifteen were LEA. The whole process of requesting and receiving prospectuses from the schools took about three months from February 2004.

### **5.10 Examination of the main study data**

Examination of the prospectuses and other church published document followed the method used in the pilot study but modified in a way that accommodated the lessons learned, including requesting printed prospectuses from schools whose information were accessible or not accessible on the internet. The prospectuses were read repeatedly in order to confirm the patterns identified in the pilot study (Section 5:6). However, further examination of the patterns revealed the following two issues: (i) the nature of church schools as a distinctive Christian community; and (ii) the role of RE and collective worship as to reinforce the distinctiveness of the schools' Christian community. This meant the employment of the Ofsted inspection reports of the entire sample schools which were readily accessible on Ofsted's website (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/reports>) and Section 23 inspection reports to embark on the further examination of the emerged themes.

### **5.11 Ethical considerations**

One appropriate way of addressing the possible ethical issues was evident from the pilot study. The pilot study dealt with the question of access to the information required from the participating schools, and the best way to collect data for the main study. The identification of the appropriate approach from the pilot study enabled the researcher to assure the participating schools of anonymity, objective and fair interpretation of their documents, and the avoidance of words biased against them. The source of funding and the purpose of the study were made known to the schools which were approached. The assurance of fair interpretation of documents and the

making available of the findings available to individual schools in the future demonstrated commitment to the attempt to provide an accurate picture of individual schools, a picture which was faithful to that which had been painted in their prospectuses. This implied avoiding the singling out of schools for either praise or criticism. Furthermore, schools were not coerced into participating; neither was there any deception. Schools that provided documents had a choice of either to send their up-to-date prospectuses to the researcher or not to send.

#### **5.12 Reliability of methodology**

It is difficult to know whether another researcher who had gathered the same data would have arrived at similar results and conclusions to those reported in this study, in view of the inevitable subjective influence of the researcher. However, given the specified aims, assumptions and methodology, it seems likely that another researcher would arrive at similar conclusions to those reached in this study.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **MAIN INVESTIGATION (1): CHURCH SCHOOLS'**

#### **UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR NATURE**



## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter examines and reports the information obtained in the course of this investigation, and attempts to answer the following questions:

1. Did church schools understand and express their nature and role in the mission of the church in their prospectuses?
2. Were the identified and expressed nature and mission of church schools compatible with liberal education philosophy?
3. Did the identified and expressed nature and mission of church schools contribute to intolerance in English society?

Information was obtained from eighty church voluntary-aided (VA) (forty Church of England (CoE) and forty Roman Catholic (RC)) schools, forty Local Education Authority (LEA) schools,<sup>27</sup> Ofsted and Section 23 inspection reports of the sample schools, and other educational documents from both the CoE and the RC churches.<sup>28</sup>

The selected schools were spread over twenty-three LEAs. The plan of this chapter was to ascertain church schools' conception of their nature and mission from the available information and to confirm or refute the findings with evidence from the Ofsted and Section 23 reports. A particular matter for discussion was the church schools' understanding of their nature and role in the mission of the church of which they were a part.

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<sup>27</sup> Appendix G contains the following: the sample (i) Church of England schools, (ii) Roman Catholic schools, (iii) LEA schools; and (iv) their socio-economic backgrounds.

<sup>28</sup> Carey *et al* (1998) 'The Importance of Church Schools', from *A Christian Voice in Education: Distinctiveness in Church Schools*, London: National Society, 1988, pp. 9–10, 13–14. Declaration on Christian Education (*Gravissimum Educationis*), 1965, Vatican; Dearing's Report, 2001.

## 6.2 The nature of church schools

Examination of the data available for this study revealed two perceptions of the nature of church schools based on:

1. The Ofsted inspection reports
2. The evidence from the schools' prospectuses.

These two perceptions are examined in detail in the sections that follow.

### 6.2.1 The nature of church schools as revealed by Ofsted inspection reports<sup>29</sup>

As indicated in Section 3.6, church schools committed themselves to public scrutiny in the form of Ofsted inspections based on the 1996 Inspection Act, Sections 10 and 23. Examination of the inspection reports of the sample schools revealed what this study calls the *Ofsted's perception of the nature of church schools*. This was based on certain quantifiable factors such as schools' locations, free school meals (FSM) consumption, special education needs (SEN), achievements in General Certificate of Secondary School examinations (GCSE), and unauthorised absences (UA) of both church and LEA schools, as is shown in Table 6:1 below. This table compares church and LEA schools in the following ways:

- location of the schools
- socio-economic backgrounds of pupils
- proportion of pupils receiving FSM
- proportion of pupils with SEN
- proportion of pupils taking unauthorised absences

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<sup>29</sup> Appendix G provides information concerning the socio-economic backgrounds of both church and LEA sample schools for this study.

**Table 6:1**

**Ofsted's perception of the nature of church schools**

School Type	Location (%)	FSM (%)	SEN (%)	A*-C (%)	UA (%)
Church	83	45 (17.6)*	66 (2.5)*	36 (54)*	21 (1.1)*
LEA	78	55 (17.6)*	45 (2.5)*	60 (54)*	43 (1.1)*

[Source: Ofsted inspection reports of the sample schools for this study - Appendix E]

\* The figures in brackets denote the national average percentages.

**School type:** whether church or LEA schools. **Location:** % of schools of each type located in areas described as socially-deprived in Ofsted reports; **FSM:** % of schools of each type with less than the national average of pupils receiving FSM; **SEN:** % of schools of each type with above the national average of pupils with SEN; **A\*-C:** % of schools of each type achieving less than the national average of five or more grade A\*-C passes at GCSE and **UA:** % of schools of each type with above the national average of pupils with unauthorised absences.

These comparisons revealed the following striking similarities between the church and LEA schools:

1. The church and LEA schools' pupil intake came from a diversity of backgrounds with similar social problems (FSM consumption and unauthorised absences).
2. Pupils in church schools achieved relatively more academically than those in LEA schools.

Despite these similarities, the comparison between the church and LEA schools also revealed the following significant variations:

1. Church schools had 5% more schools located in deprived areas than were LEA schools.
2. Ten per cent more LEA schools had below the national average of pupils receiving FSM than did the church schools.

3. Pupils in church schools were relatively socially worse off than pupils in LEA schools as was revealed in the percentage of pupils receiving FSM in the two types of schools.

The following are examples of the several questions that arose from the above revelations:

- Why did more church schools (10%) have above the national average of pupils consuming FSM than did LEA schools?
- Did the variations in the FSM consumption in the church and LEA schools contribute to their academic performances at the GSCE examinations?

There was no evidence to explain the high FSM consumption in church schools in the Ofsted inspection data (Table 6:1) which enabled this study to speculate as follows: first, as discussed in Section 6:3:1, church schools admissions policies could have contributed to the FSM consumption in the schools investigated; and, second, church schools could not have skewed their pupil intake in favour of wealthy and bright pupils of middle class background. The reason is that the church schools had 21% more schools with above the national average of pupils with SEN than did LEA schools. Thus church schools should have had fewer pupils with above the national average of SEN than did LEA schools if they had creamed off bright pupils from LEA schools. A plausible explanation for the variations in the quantifiable factors identified in Table 6:1 is that certain internal unquantifiable factors could account for their academic performances; FSM consumption and truancy record (Chapter Seven). This assumption required an investigation of how church schools accounted for their nature, academic performances, FSM consumption and truancy record in their prospectuses in the next section.

### **6.2.2 Church schools' understanding of their nature as revealed by their prospectuses**

The church schools' prospectuses were examined in order to ascertain their own understanding of their nature and explanation for the apparent variations between them and LEA schools in their academic, FSM consumption and truancy records. Examination of all the eighty church schools for this study explicitly described their nature as Denominational, Voluntary-Aided and Comprehensive of which the following extracts are typical:

St Michael is a Church of England voluntary aided comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 19 (St Michael's School, 2003/4).

St Peter's Church of England High School is an 11-18 voluntary aided comprehensive school (St Peter's School, 2003/4).

St Gregory Roman Catholic Secondary School is an 11-18 Roman Catholic voluntary-aided comprehensive (St Gregory Roman Catholic School, 2003/4).

St Thomas More School is an 11-18 mixed Roman Catholic, voluntary aided, comprehensive school (St Thomas More School, 2003/4).

These extracts clearly confirm the schools' perception of their nature as revealed above but they also raise a significant number of questions for this study and probably the audience of the prospectuses. For example:

1. What was the significance of being a CoE or a Roman Catholic school, from the perspective of the schools, and its implications for both the schools and those reading the prospectuses?
2. What were the nature, significance and the implications of the VA status of church schools?
3. What were the significance and implications of church schools' status as comprehensive?

Examination of the prospectuses failed to provide direct answers to these questions, so, as was in the pilot study (Section 5:5), the previous chapters, Ofsted and Section 23 inspection reports were drawn on to find answers to the questions and their implications for their academic, social and spiritual developments. Each aspect of the schools' expressed understanding of their nature – denominational, voluntary-aided and comprehensive – was examined in turn in the sections that follow. The next section examines church schools' nature as denominational and their practical implications for the quantifiable and unquantifiable factors underlying their academic, social and spiritual developments. Thus to what extent did church schools' understanding of their nature enabled them to be autonomous and to contribute to tolerance in society.

### **6.3 Denominational nature of church schools**

The church schools' understanding of their nature as being either CoE or RC had a historical undertone to it with some practical consequences. The CoE had historically regarded itself as the 'official' teacher of religion in England, being the Established State church (Murphy, 1971). As such, the individual schools' descriptions or statements of their nature implicitly reiterated their supposed historical right to educate the nation's children in matters of faith and morals. This was consistent with the CoE's longstanding twofold educational objective, as described by O'Keeffe:

- to provide children with numeracy and literacy skills in preparation for work
- to provide an education in the Christian religion (1988, p. 188)

In this sense, the CoE schools' statements about their nature could be an open invitation to the nation's children to be educated in the tradition of the CoE irrespective of their faith backgrounds. There was evidence the schools' prospectuses to show that the CoE schools endeavoured to educate pupils in the tradition of the CoE. The nature of this tradition is described in the following typical extracts from the CoE sample schools:

True to our Anglican foundation, we seek to inform the students about God and the strength He can bring to our lives. In turn, we ask the students to listen, think, and find their own relationship with God (Bishop Wand CoE, School, 2003/4).

The school is a community of faith with Jesus Christ at its centre where prayer is part of our daily lives (St Jude CoE School, 2003/4).

Thus the tradition of the CoE should include the preparation of pupils to have a relationship with God and to grow in Christian spirituality.<sup>30</sup> This should confirm Dearing's assertion that the CoE schools are at the heart of the mission of the church (Section 4.3, p. 84), which should make the CoE schools:

- a place for evangelism (proselytism) without manipulation and indoctrination
- a place for Christian worship in the form of daily prayer and for living out the Christian faith (Christian spirituality)
- a place for the acceptance of social, cultural, academic and spiritual differences (religious and social cohesion).

However, the selected research method for this study meant that it could neither confirm nor deny the extent to which the CoE schools lived out their expectations in practice. Nevertheless, the described denominational nature of the CoE schools

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<sup>30</sup> A detailed examination of Christian spirituality is in Section 7:3.

should enable them to fulfil their historical understanding of providing general education for, and nurturing of, young people in the Christian faith. As regards the RC schools' denominational emphasis, it was consistent with the RC Church's historical perception of its schools as a means for both the church and RC parents to fulfil a divine mission. This mission was for the church to educate all its children in RC institutions, and for RC parents to send their children to RC schools (Gaine, 1968). Thus the denominational emphasis RC in the RC schools could have confirmed that the schools were more than a place for general education. Again this study could not confirm or deny whether the schools were more than a place for general education on its own. However, Grace (2002) held that RC schools offered an extra opportunity for RC children to undertake lessons in the RC faith:

The Roman Catholic school was constituted as another form of Church and its duty was to transmit and renew the sacred truth, the Roman Catholic faith and an understanding of its discourse, symbols and ritual practices among its largely poor and working class adherents (p. 10).

The assumption was that the RC could have provided RC schools as a reminder to RC parents of their divine duty to instruct their children in the RC 'truth'. This 'truth' was to avoid 'mixed' (inter-denominational) schools, which could have an adverse effect on their children. Gaine (1968) put it thus: 'Catholic children must not attend non-Catholic schools, neutral, or mixed schools, those opened to non-Catholics' (p. 268). This expectation on Catholic parents could have informed RC schools' understanding of their nature, as is shown in the typical extracts below:

This is a Roman Catholic Comprehensive school and the teaching is according to the doctrines of the Church (St Benedict RC School, 2003/4).



The school is part of a network of Roman Catholic schools provided by the Archdiocese... and it exists to educate children with a Roman Catholic ethos (Corpus Christi RC School, 2003/4).

These extracts should clearly confirm RC schools as discriminating against non-Roman Catholic pupils, however, the '*Gravissimum Educationis*' (GE) (1965) or the Vatican II's declaration on education has advocated a new kind of openness in RC schools to demonstrate their capacity to cater for both RC and non-RC pupils. This new openness could also demonstrate the schools' capacity to work with other Christian denominations to challenge secularism, encouraging as it does, a way of life without God (Section 2:5, p. 20ff). Thus the denominational nature of RC schools should enable the recognition that a particular RC school was more than an educational institution - rather, it should be a place to gain a deeper insight of Christ through RC teachings. The implication is that lessons in Catholicism could not, and should not; contradict the openness of Catholic schools in reaching out to those outside the RC Church. However, critics of church schools (CoE and RC) have argued that any emphasis on instructing pupils in a particular denominational tradition could discriminate against non-denominational affiliated applicants. This argument could be another way of asserting that church schools mitigate intolerance in society. This has been one of the critics' main objections to denominational schools as neutral participants in the education provision in England. For example, Porteus Wood (2001), the General Secretary of the National Secular Society (NSS), objected to the expansion of faith schools for the reason that 'children of all races and creeds need to mix if we are ever to eradicate racism and religious prejudice' (cited in

Kelly, 2001). There is a flawed assumption that racism and religious prejudice thrive in the absence of racial and religious diversity. Such an assumption could effectively brand all relationships racist except those of inter-racial and inter-religious nature. Rabbi Jonathan Romain broadly echoed Wood's view, and even went further to describe faith schools as 'a recipe for disaster'. He wrote:

If Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other children do not mix – and nor do their families – they become ignorant of each other, then suspicious, fearful and hostile (Romain, 2001, p. 18).

Romain assumed that religious and cultural mix was a key to a community with a reduced prejudice in which case, according to him, faith schools failed to provide a framework for a community of shared values. However, even if Romain was right, he failed to provide empirical evidence to demonstrate how a mixed community of people could, and should, bond with one another. Furthermore, he made the flawed assumption that church schools were single homogeneous social groups. The basis of this assumption has been examined in Sections 6:3:4 and 6:8:1 and has been found wanting. This study therefore argues that a church school community would, and should, consist of varying levels of religious and social awareness, with a variety of family backgrounds, a range of intellectual ability and diverse degrees of exposure to material influences (Section 6:8:1). Moreover, a church [faith] school should be able to maintain its peculiar conception of the good life so as to enable dialogue with other social and religious groups with different conceptions of the good life in a pluralist society to occur. Thus the church schools could only engage in dialogue with other

groups if they were distinctive from them, as is put succinctly by John V. Taylor (1981) thus:

[dialogue is a] sustained conversation between parties who are not saying the same thing and who recognize and respect the differences, the contradictions, and the mutual exclusions between their various ways of thinking (p. 212)

Thus the church schools occupation of the centre of the mission of the church should identify them as providing a distinctive education from that of LEA schools. In light of this understanding, the denominational status of church schools should enable them to make a claim to the mission of the church as their own. This mission of the church which the church schools were a part could be summed up as follows:

- to proclaim God as the Creator of the world
- to proclaim Man as a creature with a special relationship with God
- to recognise that the special relationship has been broken because Man has rebelled against God
- to acknowledge that God, through Jesus, has become a man to live among human beings
- to proclaim that Jesus has shown Man the way back to a renewed relationship with God through the community He has established
- to bring people into a position of accepting Christ as Saviour and hence of entering into a close relationship with Him and entering into the new community
- to develop the community in order to nourish its members
- to equip members with the skills and tools to develop and protect the earth (cf. Section 4:3).

Thus the mission of the church should be providing an environment for in which Man could be restored to God, including the associated implications discussed in Chapter Seven. This should confirm the inextricable link between the Christian faith and the education offered in church schools. However, the church schools' apparent place

within the mission of the church should raise the question of the extent to which the schools' perceived role enhanced or hindered their capacity to contribute to social cohesion and tolerance in society. Examination of the schools' admissions policies, to which the discussion now turns, should help to provide some answers to these questions.

### **6.3.1 Admissions policies and the nature of church schools**

One of the main charges levelled against church schools as regards their capacity to contribute to tolerance in society was this: their pupil intake was selective, divisive and undermined social cohesion (Taylor, 2005). Critics pointed to church-affiliation criterion in the schools' admissions policies as the justification for this charge. This charge implied the dubious assumption that LEA schools never made selections, and that they operated open pupil-admission policies. However, as discussed in Section 6:8:1, LEA schools operated different kind of admissions policies which were equally selective and discriminatory in that sense. The law governing admissions policy for maintained schools in England was set out in various Education Acts, for example, those of 1944, 1980, 1986, and 1988, and the School Standards and Framework Act (1998). The 1980 Education Act<sup>31</sup> Section 6 (1) entitled parents to state a preference for schools controlled by their LEA. The LEA and governors of church schools were required by law to comply with any stated parental preferences, unless compliance 'prejudices the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources'. Based on this legal provision, a church school could refuse admission to a pupil if

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<sup>31</sup> The 1980 Education Act also introduced market economy into the English education system –see Section 3:8

such an admission could undermine its Christian philosophy of education. Furthermore, church schools' Articles of Government, and the provisions laid down in the 1944 Education Act<sup>32</sup>, afforded them relative independence in specifying their individual schools' admissions policies and oversubscription criteria. The 1986 Education Act (2) Section 33 obliged voluntary-aided schools, including church schools, to have regard to the views of LEAs in determining their admissions policies. The 2002 Education Act also introduced a number of changes to the admissions system in the form of a new Code of Practice and Regulations. This Code of Practice gave a new co-ordinating role to the LEA, and required governing bodies to heed the advice and guidance of a number of bodies, such as the Diocesan Directors and the Admissions Forum, regarding admission arrangements. Effectively, both church and LEA schools were subject to the same legal principles or rules regarding the formulation of their admissions policies. However, governing bodies of church schools were also required by law (1996 School Inspections Act) to safeguard the schools' religious character. This made a church school's governing body a defender and protector of the school's religious character legally. Furthermore, the church schools' governors were required to operate within the law, and to maintain the stipulations in their trust deeds. A trust deed was a document that determined the religious character of a school of which O'Keefe wrote:

The Trust deed on which a particular school was founded may stipulate an area of benefit - a parish or other area of residence for the benefit of those people for whom the school came into being. It may also refer to the kind of religious practices and teaching the school was intended to uphold (Admissions of pupils 81/5 quoted in O'Keeffe, 1986, p. 20).

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<sup>32</sup> See Table 2:1 at page 25

The trust deeds of fifty-five per cent of the church schools considered in this investigation stated their principal aim as the encouragement of poor children in a particular parish who otherwise had no access to education, to learn to read the Bible ('educate the poor of this parish...') and to prepare themselves for future life. Some of the trust deeds dated back to the nineteenth century, a period when free universal education was uncommon, but they provided an insight into the original intention or basis for church schools. Safeguarding the nature or the distinctive identity of church schools was seen as one of the key duties of foundation governors (church-appointed governors), as is illustrated in the following typical extracts:

It is the Governors' responsibility, in accordance with the school's mission statement, to secure the Roman Catholic character and ethos of the school on behalf of the Trustees, Bishop and Diocese ... (St Edmund RC School, 2003/4).

The Governors aim to offer a high quality education based on Christian principles for all children at the School. We recognise our responsibility to children of Christian families; to those from Church schools; and to children in the local community (St Philip COE School, 2003/4).

The dilemma for many church schools' governing bodies could be balancing the requirement of their respective trust deeds and remaining relevant to modern English society. This dilemma could be more acute in areas with diverse religious, cultural and ethnic groups. In such areas, adherence to a trust deed's stipulations could create tension between church schools and their local communities (Section 6:3:7). This should raise the question of whether the historical perceived mission of the church schools should inform their admissions policies and whether such policies would be compatible with the norms of modern English society. Examination of the church

schools' admissions policies in their prospectuses (Section 6:3:4) revealed that the church schools' governing bodies should be able to maintain such a balance. The extracts below are typical of how governing bodies endeavoured to make admissions policies reflective of their local communities:

Applications are welcomed from all those who share, support and uphold our Christian ideals, ethos and principles (St Eugene RC School, 2003/4).

The governors welcome applications from all parents and children from the local community including the neighbouring regions (All Saints CoE School, 2003/4).

The question of whether governing bodies were able to achieve the balance indicated in their respective schools' admissions policies is examined in Section 6:3:4 below. Besides, apart from addressing the diversity of pupil intake, governing bodies had to contend with other challenges to the schools' religious character including working within market constraints. There was a view that modern English society had become more secularised, materialistic, individualistic, consumerist and pluralistic than the period of the 1944 Education Act (see Chapter Three). For example, Margaret Thatcher (1993, p. 626), the former Conservative Prime Minister (1979-1990), provocatively asserted that 'there is no such thing as society'. Thus individualism was the order of the day which, unsurprisingly, was the centrepiece of the Conservative Government's education policy in the 1980s and the early 1990s. This education policy was also dominated by market economy which stressed the importance of individual competitive ethics in education. The involvement of market in education should emphasise accountability to parents as consumers in the form of published league tables of schools' test scores and external examination results (Grace, 2002).

Such an emphasis would require the maintained schools, including church schools, to concentrate on individual profitability within the education system. The implication of market economy for church schools would be to compete among themselves and against LEA schools for pupils, whose results in public examinations could ensure a high showing in the performance and league tables. However, church schools' engagement in the market culture could be dubbed 'selection' and 'discriminatory' by their critics. Besides, the church schools' engagement in competition for pupils based on their academic profitability would, and should, raise the question of whether, in so engaging, they could compromise their educational mission of inclusiveness and individual uniqueness before God. The question for church schools to address should be whether they would compromise their educational mission through adjusting pupil intake to ensure their profitability in the market place. This was a difficult question for this study since the selected research method could not allow personal interaction to occur between the researcher and the participation schools to gather information whose examination could have provided an answer. However, examination of the church schools' admission policies showed that, theoretically, applicants to the church schools were offered places irrespective of their faith backgrounds. Thus the church schools could have neither been selective nor discriminatory in their pupil intake. Some scenarios have been purposely designed later in this chapter to examine in detail the charge that the church schools were selective and discriminatory. However, the idea of the church schools' engagement in competing for *best* pupils could imply that some pupils were better than others which should raise the question of the criteria for determining *best* pupils. For example, Section 7:5 explores the



apparent legitimacy of the use of academic ability as a determinant for best or profitable pupils. However, examination of the church schools' admissions criteria revealed oversubscription criteria designed to favour church affiliated applicants which could be employed should the number of applicants exceeded the number of places available in a given school. The following extracts are typical of the sample church schools:

In the event of oversubscription, the Governors will allocate places using the following criteria, which are listed in order of priority [cf. Section 6:3:2] (St Augustine CoE School, 2003/4)

Whenever there are more applications than places available, priority will always be given ...in accordance with the oversubscription criteria ... [cf. Section 6:3:3] (St George RC School, 2003/4).

The sections that follow explore in detail the sample schools' oversubscription criteria and their implications for their academic, social and spiritual development beginning with those of the CoE schools.

### **6.3.2 The Church of England schools' oversubscription criteria**

The following is a summary of the admission criteria used by the individual CoE schools investigated in this study. They are listed in the order of decreasing priority:

1. pupils whose parents are regularly involved in the work and worship of the parish church
2. pupils from other CoE parishes in the Deanery, with the support of their priest
3. pupils from families belonging to other churches that are members of the Council of Churches of Great Britain and Ireland, with the support of their priest or minister
4. pupils from families belonging to other Christian churches that are not members of the Council of Churches, with the support of their church minister or leader

5. pupils who live closest to the school (the shortest measured walking distance from the school using a public road or footpath)

The above list shows criteria designed to facilitate admissions of:

- pupils of the CoE
- pupils from other Christian denominations
- children in the local community.

In essence, the order of priorities in the criteria appeared consistent with the traditional twin educational aims of the Church of England (Chapter Two). The first and second priorities should confirm the schools' understanding of their nature as being denominationally rooted. The third and fourth priorities should also confirm the church schools as a place for young Christian people to develop and grow in the Christian faith irrespective of their denominational backgrounds. The fifth criterion, however, permitted an invitation to local young people who might be neither members of the CoE nor other Christian denominations but wanted to be educated in the CoE schools and tradition. Thus these young people could come from other faiths or none. However, this criterion could not guarantee places for non-Christian applicants except to reiterate the probability of such people gaining admission to the CoE schools should there be places. Non-guarantee of places for the non-Christian applicants raised the question of the extent to which the CoE could sustain its traditional dichotomy of providing education for those of faith and those without. Dearing (2001), in response, took the view that the CoE should be able to sustain its apparent twofold educational aim for the following two reasons:

1. The combination of the two aims should enable the CoE to discharge its duty of service to the nation as the Established Church.
2. The two should also enable the CoE to embark on social and spiritual evangelism to fulfil its mission as a Christian church.

Dearing wrote:

We see no dichotomy between the service and nurture purposes of the Church in education. Rather we see the Church serving the nation in a distinctive way as a gospel imperative. The Church has a commission to engage with society and its institutional structures precisely because there is good news to offer. It is part of the Church wider sense of mission to society to engage with the community in a distinctive manner, recognizing the common elements within the experience of its people and sharing in their life. This compels us to be in education, and visibly in the bricks and mortar of our schools themselves (para 3:21).

Thus the church schools provided Christian education which could not distinguish between Christian nurturing and general education. This has raised the question of the relevance and fairness of the CoE as the Established Church in the modern English society perceived as multi-faith, -cultural and secular. For example, writers, lobbyists and political parties such as Ramsey (1970), Tony Benn (1988) a former Labour Member of Parliament (MP)<sup>33</sup>, the Liberal Democrats (2001)<sup>34</sup> respectively have all argued for the dissolution of the partnership between the CoE and the state. Thus the CoE's twofold education philosophy has been called into question or challenged. The basis of this challenge was that the perceived partnership between the CoE and the State was flawed because: (i) it was not an equal partnership (Ramsey, 1970), (ii) it was not consistent with England's multi-faith and pluralistic society (The Parekh Commission, 2000) and, (iii) it could be incompatible with the Human Rights Act

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<sup>33</sup> Tony Benn, a former Labour Member of Parliament (MP) in 1988 and 991 proposed a legislation that would have disestablished the Church of England.

<sup>34</sup> The Liberal Democrats favoured disestablishment of the church in 2001 and initiated a debate in the House of Lords in May 2002.

(1998). Ramsey, for example, argued that the CoE would have failed LEA schools as the rightful teacher in matters of faith and morals if the partnership was equal. Thus the church would be required to teach pupils of all maintained schools about the Christian faith and morals. Thus the dual system of education in England and the CoE's role in it would be meaningless or a contradiction in terms. The dual system was partly designed to allow denominational schools the independence to teach the Christian faith and morals to their pupils (Section 2:6; cf. Table 2:1). Ramsey (1970) contended that the CoE must have the confidence to sever the partnership and to concentrate on providing schools for those meeting the church-affiliation criterion (p. 219). The implication is that the CoE should reconsider its perception of the partnership with the State unless it can participate fully in modern national life as an equal partner. However, this study takes the view that to sever the existing partnership, despite its flaws, would be a disaster for both the church and the nation for two reasons. First, the church's withdrawal from the dual education system could consign the entire English education system to secularism, with no alternative form of education within the maintained system for the nation's children. While the partnership may be an anomaly, it is one of the best ways for the church to engage in its mission of social and spiritual evangelism, and to provide an alternative [Christian] education to that of secularism. Dearing put it thus:

...the Church has an opportunity to reach out to parents. The 900,000 children provide access to parents, very many of whom would otherwise have no contact with the Church (2001).

Second, a withdrawal from the maintained system would not result in any added benefit to the church and its schools. As discussed in Section 6:3:1, the CoE schools with VA status should have the independence to operate fairly freely in terms of staff appointments and the provision of RE taught in accordance with the Christian faith regarded as true. This should indicate the need for the CoE schools' governing bodies to formulate admissions policies to concentrate mainly on church-affiliated pupils in order to develop an environment in which non-church affiliated pupils could experience the Christian faith in action.

### **6.3.3 Roman Catholic schools' oversubscription criteria**

Typical oversubscription criteria disclosed in the prospectuses of RC schools are listed below in the order of decreasing priority:

- Baptised Roman Catholics who attend mass weekly in a given parish
- Baptised Roman Catholics who attend mass weekly in other parishes and for whom a particular Roman Catholic school is the nearest
- Siblings of applicants who meet the above two criteria
- Non-Roman Catholic baptised applicants of other Christian denominations whose parents wish them to have a Roman Catholic education. All pupils will be expected to follow and participate in all activities of the school, including religious education

The decreasing priority within the oversubscription criteria confirms the already documented view that RC schools were designed primarily for RC pupils (Section 2:5, p. 19). However, the definition of 'Roman Catholic' appeared to have been modified from 'a baptised individual' by a RC priest to a baptised 'practising Roman

Catholic’ meaning a weekly attendance at mass.<sup>35</sup> Furthermore, it restricted the eligibility of admission of RC pupils to a particular RC school to a catchment area or a RC parish. Thus other RC applicants could be denied places or subjected to discrimination based on their area of residence. This should raise the question of whether the RC schools investigated failed in their mission to those RC applicants who resided outside their catchment areas or parishes. While the second criterion confirmed that no RC applicant would fall outside catchment areas defined by the oversubscription criteria, there was evidence to suggest otherwise. For example, some headteachers used interviews to assess the level of applicants’ commitment to the RC or the Christian faith. This should raise the question of the fate of those RC applicants who could be turned down for being insufficiently RC. For example, how could RC applicants deemed to have failed their commitment level test or to meet the catchment area criterion fulfil their ‘divine’ obligation to be educated in RC school and the RC faith? The RC Church could, as a consequence, be in breach of its perceived divine obligation or duty to provide a RC education in RC schools for all RC children. The order of priority in the criteria for admission was consistent with Arthur’s holistic model of a RC school which, according to him, was what made RC schools distinctive (Section 4.4, p. 105). However, this study argues that if RC schools worked as partners with other Christian denominations, they would need to follow Arthur’s pluralistic model of schooling, and hence accept pupils from other denominations, and possibly other faiths. Without the possibility of such partnerships, RC schools would regard their distinctiveness as being largely dependent on their

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<sup>35</sup> The question of whether weekly attendance at mass is a sufficient measurement for pupils’ and parents’ Christian commitment levels is discussed under Scenario One (Section 6.3.5).

exclusion of non-Roman Catholics. Such a policy would lead RC schools back to what Grace (2002) described as the ‘secret garden’ of the pre-Vatican II era. While the final priority within the criteria suggested an invitation to non-Roman Catholics, it offered no guarantee of favourable consideration for an available place. The impression given by the RC schools’ oversubscription criteria was that they perceived their nature as rooted in the RC Church. Examination of both the CoE and the RC schools’ oversubscription criteria revealed their pupil intake as denominationally-based, which potentially excluded pupils with no church affiliation. Such a practice, if confirmed, would make church schools exclusive and liable to contributing to intolerance in modern English society. However, a close examination of the individual denominational schools and some external documents painted a different picture from the one of the oversubscription criteria. The next section will show that, in practice, church schools tended to be more pluralistic in their pupil intake than some of their LEA counterparts.

#### **6.3.4 Actual church schools’ admission practices**

Both the sample CoE and the RC Church schools affirmed the use of church-affiliation as their chief criterion for selecting pupils for their respective schools. For example, all the RC schools and thirty-five of the CoE schools gave first priority to practising RC and the CoE pupils respectively, which implied the schools’ understanding of their nature as being an extension of their respective church communities. However, the evidence in the data suggested otherwise. For example, 64% of RC schools claimed to have offered places to pupils from other Christian

denominations in the proportion of 10% to 15% of the agreed standard number (now admission number) or the school's capacity in a given year (School Admissions Code of Practice, 2002, Section 3:2). This meant the remaining 36% might have offered their available places to RC applicants which would still have been lower than those with a mixed pupil intake. Similarly, 78% of the CoE schools claimed to have offered 85% of their admission numbers to pupils whose parents belonged to any of the churches in the Council of Churches for Britain and Ireland. Based on this, the remaining 15% of the admission numbers or places available might have been given to applicants of parents with no particular religious affiliation who might have expressed their preference for a particular CoE school on their application form. The 28% of the CoE schools claimed to have offered their available places to applicants belonging to the CoE. In fact one CoE school claimed to have 50% of its admission number to those who met the church-affiliation criterion and the remaining 50% to the applicants of other faiths or none, with the proviso that they would attend religious education (RE) lessons and take part in Christian worship at the school. Another CoE school made the following reference to other faiths in its admissions policy:

The Governors have designated 30 places as open places to be offered to students who with their parent(s)/carer(s) are practising members of non-Christian major world faiths and where the application is accompanied by a supportive religious reference from their place of worship (Bishop Wand CoE School, 2003/4).

There was no way of corroborating the figures given in the church schools' prospectuses since the selected research method for this study could not allow another



means of collecting information that could have either confirmed or disputed the situation in practice. However, there was evidence available in the literature to confirm the claims of the church schools in their prospectuses. For example, O’Keeffe (1986) and Grace (2002) showed in their respective studies that while church schools’ admissions criteria favoured church-affiliated applicants in theory, they were not borne out by actual practice. O’Keeffe pointed out the CoE schools in her study stated in their admissions criteria to give first preference or priority to applicants from Christian background but, she argued that, the opposite was true in practice. For example, she pointed out that over half of the sample schools in her study admitted pupils from other Christian traditions or other faiths, and also pupils with no faith. She provided statistical evidence to show that 45% of the schools in her study used church-affiliation criterion for their pupil intake (1986, pp. 22-23). The implication was that 55% of her sample schools might have used admissions criteria that could have guaranteed a religiously diverse pupil intake. Grace also provided a similar statistical evidence for RC schools, pointing out that only 20% of his sample schools had a wholly RC pupil intake. He also pointed out that 8% of the schools had 50% or more non-Roman Catholic pupil intake confirming pluralistic admissions criteria. The Ofsted inspection reports on some of the sample schools for this study also confirmed the occurrence of such practices, as the following typical extracts show:

Selection is on faith grounds and 15 per cent of places are allocated to students of other world faiths (St Thomas More RC School, Ofsted Report, 2004).

Pupils are drawn from a broad social spectrum and from a wide catchment area...half of the pupils are offered places based on parental religious affiliation and the other half based on expressing preference for the school on the application form...these places are open to pupils of other faiths or no faith (St Anselm CoE School, Ofsted Report, 2004).

The admissions practices in the church schools should challenge the view that the church schools were exclusive and did little or nothing to mitigate intolerance in the English society. In fact Dearing (2001) made the good point that church schools were essentially Christian places which offered opportunities for pupils who might not otherwise have had an experience of the Christian faith in action. He wrote:

Church schools are places where the Christian faith is lived, and which therefore offer opportunities to pupils and their families to explore the truths of the Christian faith, to develop spiritually and morally, and to have a basis for choice about Christian commitment (Dearing, 2001).

Thus the church schools should be opened to those with and without Christian faith thereby contributing to social and community cohesion. This would mean that critics who misconstrue the church schools' use of church-affiliation criterion for pupil intake and scant reference to other faiths in their admissions policies would never be satisfied with whatever church schools did to mitigate intolerance in society. Thus critics' main goal would always be for the church, or religion in general, to be removed from the maintained educational system altogether. The next few sections (Sections 7:7 – 7:9) contain three scenarios designed to explore the possibility that the church schools' admissions criteria contribute to intolerance in society and potentially undermine social cohesion.

### 6. 3.5 Scenario One

This scenario explores how church-affiliated criterion bolsters church schools' capacity to contribute to both social cohesion and tolerant society.

- A is a church and only secondary school in a given catchment area.
- A is unable to fill available places with applicants from its catchment area.
- A also attracts a greater number of applicants from outside its catchment area than its own.
- Application for places from outside the catchment area exceeds the available places.

The question emerging from this scenario is the reason for the schools inability to fill places available from its catchment area. The following assumptions could be made in an attempt to answer the question posed.

- The use of church-affiliated criterion excludes non-church affiliated applicants from the catchment area.
- Applicants from within the catchment area are fewer than the school's admission number.
- Eligible applicants either prefer schools outside the catchment area or non-church school.

These assumptions could enable the conclusion that applicants from within the catchment area have been offered places at the school or have been denied places based on non-church affiliation. However, the school's inability to fill the number of places available should enable a conclusion non-church affiliation could not have played a role in the admissions process. Besides, church-affiliated criterion would only be used when applicants exceed the standard number. This should rule out any notion of discrimination against non-church affiliated applicants. However, church-

affiliation criterion should be essential for determining eligible applicants from outside the catchment area. The question arising from such a policy is how to determine eligible CoE or RC affiliated applicants for the remaining places within the standard number. The policy of both the CoE and the RC dioceses in which the schools investigated in this study were situated was to discourage the use of the level of church involvement or of commitment as a determinant. The reason given for this policy was to discourage those parents who had become known as ‘pew-jumpers’ (Doughty and Clark, 2006). Doughty and Clark defined this phrase to mean ‘parents who make sudden conversions to Christianity, then play an ostentatious role in parish affairs...’ (p. 10). This definition made a flawed assumption that a sudden conversion to the Christian faith or to suddenly join a church fellowship at a time of personal, family or national need was wrong. However, there are plenty of people in the New Testament (NT) who went to meet with Jesus at a time of personal or family need. For example, a leper went to Jesus and said to Him, ‘...Lord, if you will, you can make me clean’ (Matthew 8:2). A centurion also went to Jesus because his servant was ‘...lying paralyzed at home, in terrible distress.’ (Matthew 8:6). Matthew refers to a ruler who went to kneel before Jesus and said, ‘My daughter has just died; but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live’ (9:18). Furthermore, Jesus makes this invitation: ‘Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest’ (Matthew 11:28). This evidence shows that there is nothing controversial about a sudden approach to Jesus and His church at a time of a great personal or family need. However, it raises the question of whether the church and its schools condone the apparent insincerity of those aggressive parents who might set out deliberately to

deceive them. This is one of the paradoxes of the Christian faith, on one hand, it invites people to come to Jesus and, on the other hand, there is no quantifiable criterion for measuring the sincerity of their individual responses. Of course, the church and its schools might resort to the use of criteria such as change in: life-styles, attitudes, use of money and so on, but such criteria are too subjective to be measured objectively.

While there is nothing controversial about a sudden approach to Jesus and His church at a time of a personal need, the instances cited from the Bible show that personal faith in Jesus and the acceptance of His authority should be at the heart of those sudden approaches. For example, the leper knelt before (worshipped) Jesus and called Him ‘Lord’ (Matt. 8:2). The centurion also called Jesus ‘Lord’ (Matt. 8:6) and admitted that he did not deserve any favours from Him: “‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof...’” (Matt. 8:8). Such responses to Jesus confirmed the leper’s and the centurion’s sincerity to which He responded thus: “‘I will; be clean’” to the leper (Matt. 8:3) and to the centurion “‘Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith’” (Matt. 8:10). It is possible that the so-called ‘pew-jumpers’ could have been asking some serious questions of the church, as those who approached Jesus did, to which the church must respond. For example, parents could be asking about how their children might find satisfactory answers to the questions of the nature and meaning of human life. Of course, critics could argue that ‘pew-jumpers’ would not be asking such questions, except to do whatever was necessary to get their children into good schools, and most of them are perceived as being good.

Even if parents did what was necessary to find good schools for their children, their attitude should be consistent with those men who approached Jesus for help. The question for the church schools is how to measure the level of the sincerity of the so-called ‘pew-jumpers’. The assumption is that it would, and should, be unfair and inappropriate to use regular church attendance as the determinant of ‘pew-jumpers’ and pupils’ level commitment. Moreover, a long term membership of a church is, and should, not synonymous with a personal commitment to Christ. However, 15% of the church schools investigated for this study indicated in their admissions policies that they used interviews to determine the acceptable level of parents’ and pupils’ levels of commitment as a criterion of eligibility for pupil admission. Critics have argued that the use of interviews could be a covert selection based on other factors, such as a parent’s profession. Grace (2002), in his study, challenged five RC headteachers with the assertion that interviews constituted a covert selection on academic, social and racial grounds. The headteachers denied the charge, and prompted one of them to defend the use of interviews in the following terms:

The purpose of the interview is really to establish the degree of Roman Catholicity of the application. ... We send them a form to fill in relating to Roman Catholic practice, e.g. regularity of attendance at Mass on the part of the parents and child; degree of involvement in the parish and parish activities by parents and applicant (p. 163).

The problem with the interview procedure is that it could easily convey a wrong message to applicants and to wider society that the church schools look for factors other than parents’ and pupils’ levels of Christian commitment. For example, what could justify the denial of a place in a RC school to an applicant with a RC baptism

certificate for not being sufficiently Roman Catholic? Even if both parents and their child have lapsed, a decision to deny a lapsed RC a way back to a RC institution could be interpreted as a failure of duty on the part of the RC Church (see Chapter Two). A RC applicant with a valid baptism certificate would, and should, not need an interview to determine the extent of his or her Roman Catholicity. Thus the use of interviews could undermine the significance of the sacrament of baptism and especially the validity of infant baptism practised by the RC Church and other Christian denominations. The validity of infant baptism and baptism in general in relation to individual Christian commitment is outside the scope of this study. However, it could be argued that commitment to Christ is evident in parents' decision to request baptism for their child whether or not they are conscious of its implications. Despite this understanding, the question of determining parents' and pupils' levels of commitment remains unanswered. Examination of the schools' prospectuses revealed that, for example, some of the church schools adopted the principle of 'first come, first served' while others used selection based on who lived closest to particular schools. However, using these policies would still leave the question of whether church schools discriminate against non-church affiliated applicants unanswered. The church and its schools would always be vulnerable to the charge of discrimination, so they should accept that there will always be aggressive parents who will do what ever is necessary to get church schools for their children. As such, the church, through the schools could minister to these parents in the form of personal contacts with the schools. The point made here is that the use of church-affiliation criterion could, and should, enable the church schools to draw pupils and

parents from different socio-economic backgrounds and diversity of religious faiths and cultures (cf. Section 6:3:4) and thereby contribute to social cohesion and tolerance in society.

### **6.3.6 Scenario Two**

This scenario explores the extent to which the use of church affiliation criterion for pupil intake mitigates intolerance in society. For example:

- B is the only denominational VA school in a given area
- Several LEA schools in the area have more available places than has B
- The number of applicants to B exceeds its available places

Several assumptions can be made from this scenario. For example, there is an obvious assumption that the applicants might have preferred the church school to LEA schools with probable falling rolls. This preference could have been based on certain Christian values and academic standard manifested in the church school, but not in that of LEA. Such assumptions presuppose that the governing body of the church school has successfully safeguarded its Christian character, and might have consequently attracted parents and pupils from diverse backgrounds. While church-affiliation criterion might have contributed to the process of safeguarding the values underpinning the school's education, it could also have, theoretically, excluded a number of applicants on the same basis. However, the use of church-affiliation criterion is consistent with the law, which encourages denial of an admission if it 'prejudices the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources' (cf. Section 6:3:1). Thus a church school would act within the law if it refused admission



to pupils whose presence within the school environment might undermine its ethos and educational vision. Despite the provision of the law, the church school would still face an accusation of elitism and contributing to intolerance in society. However, in a democratic pluralist society, church schools would be behaving appropriately if it chose to safeguard the values underpinning their nature and identity. Dearing was also correct in his assessment that, the church school should conclude, in a situation such as this, that its task is to nurture Christian children in their faith and to allocate its resources accordingly. Critics of church schools cannot have it both ways: to advocate pluralism on the one hand and to oppose the value system that underpins a school's distinctive character on the other. The pluralist tenet in this respect should enhance the church schools' use of church-affiliation criterion even though it might, on certain occasions, exclude non-church affiliated applicants.

### **6.3.7 Scenario Three**

This scenario examines the view that an admissions policy attracting socially advantaged pupils could not enhance a church school's capacity to contribute to a tolerant society. It challenges the assumption that a church school attracting such pupils should introduce quota system into its admissions policy.

- C is a church VA school among LEA schools in a well-off catchment area surrounded by socially and economically deprived areas
- Applications from within the catchment-area for places at C exceed the number of places available
- Applicants from the socio-economic deprived surrounding areas were less successful than those from the catchment-area of C

This scenario assumes that pupil intake for C was confined to pupils from the socially-advantaged area. This raises two questions as to: (i) whether pupil intake was based on church-affiliation criterion; and (ii) whether there was anything wrong with condoning such an intake. Assuming that pupil intake was based on church-affiliation criterion, it would be difficult to argue that such an intake were either right or wrong. Such a school would have formulated an admissions policy based on the school's trust deed and complied with the law. What may be right or wrong, in this sense, is the rejection of the policy which has led to the school's pupil intake. Thus it would be wrong to take the view that it was inappropriate for the school to use church affiliation criterion that drew pupils from socially-advantaged areas who happened to be Christians. Critics of church schools argued that such an admission policy could contribute to intolerance in modern English society. For example, Lord Baker of Dorking (2006) proposed amendment 146A on 18 July during the House of Lords Committee Stage debate regarding the Education and Inspections Bill (2006). This amendment related to Section 72(2) of the *School Standards and Framework Act* (1998) which read:

1. (2A) No proposal may be made for a new school which has a religious character to make arrangements in respect of the admission of pupils unless the condition in subsection (2B) is satisfied.
2. (2B) The condition is that at least 30 per cent of pupils admitted to the school are not practising the religion of the school.

This amendment intended to encourage newly-built state-funded faith schools in England to take up to at least 25% of pupils from other backgrounds, and to devolve decision-making over admissions to local authorities as an attempt to bolster social

cohesion. Alan Johnson (MP), the then Secretary of State for Education, had indicated to table amendment to the *Education Bill* (2006) to make it mandatory for all new faith schools to reserve 25% of places for non-church affiliated pupils. This debate or the amendment made a flawed assumption that a healthy community depended on a mixture of different cultures and religions (cf. Section 6:3). However, Lord Baker and Alan Johnson (MP) failed to provide empirical evidence to show that schools with a mixture of different cultures and religions contributed to social cohesion more than those of mono-culture and -religion. After strenuous opposition from faith groups; especially the RC Church,<sup>36</sup> the Secretary of State dropped the proposal or amendment to make the quota system mandatory for all faith-based VA schools. Meanwhile the CoE had undertaken to offer 25% of the admission number of all their new schools to non-faith pupils from 2006 which was consistent with Dearing's (2001) proposal. Dearing had previously asserted that a quota system would enable, for example, church-affiliated applicants from outside C's catchment area to gain admission to the school. He also argued that a quota system would promote community togetherness although he provided no evidence to support this assertion. However, there was an implication that failure to implement a quota system could imply that the church schools, such as C, contributed to a divided society. He further argued that if the failure of pupils from deprived areas to gain admission was perceived to be based on their social, faith or ethnic backgrounds, the consequent misgivings in the community could create even deeper divisions. Dearing therefore insisted that, for reasons of fairness and the sake of community cohesion, church

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<sup>36</sup> Appendix H is a published copy of correspondence between the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham and the Secretary of State for Education.

schools should operate a 'quota system'. This was, from Dearing's perspective, to promote social integration because it could create an opportunity for:

- non-Christian pupils to experience education in a Christian environment
- the church to win the hearts and minds of the prospective partners in relation to the possible expansion of church schools
- the furtherance of church mission
- an enriched life within the school

Three issues emerged from the idea of a quota system. First, a quota system would imply that the church schools' admissions policies were inherently discriminatory. Such a view should raise the question of whom the schools might discriminate against. Unless, of course, there was a covert selection based on social factors in the oversubscription criteria, there should be no justification for church schools to formulate admissions policies based on quotas. Embarking on quotas for pupil intake would, and should, undermine the justification for church schools in modern English society (cf. Section 4:3). There is a need for the church to be confident in its intended purpose for their schools to enable them articulate it in their prospectuses. Otherwise, church schools' admissions policies, as they stood, could permit admissions of pupils from the entire social, cultural and ethnic spectrum. Second, a quota system could potentially lower certain pupils' self-esteem as they would be deemed poor and be subjected to social engineering in order to enhance their place in society. Preferential treatment through a quota system could not guarantee inclusiveness; rather it could lead to potential stigmatisation of pupils. Thus there is nothing wrong with, for example, C's pupil intake reflecting the socio-economic characteristics of its catchment area, unless such socio-economic factors are intentionally employed to

reject applicants from ‘undesirable’ backgrounds. Third, to advocate such an admissions policy could suggest that pupil intake based solely on church-affiliation criterion undermines social integration. Such a suggestion could confirm the charge of elitism against church schools leading to the conclusion that selection based on church-affiliation criterion was inappropriate for church schools. Church schools need church-affiliation criterion within their admissions policies to ensure the maintenance of the schools’ religious character. These considerations refute the idea that schools’ pupil intake based church-affiliation criterion is a recipe for divisiveness and intolerance in society. On the contrary, the use of this criterion amounts to the schools’ recognition and acceptance of difference in a pluralist society. It is therefore nonsensical to maintain that selection based on either faith criterion or catchment area is inherently wrong.

#### **6.4 Church schools are voluntary aided (VA)**

This section examines the view that the voluntary-aided (VA) status of the church schools provided them with legal justification to offer Christian education to their pupils. It explores the meaning and the implications of VA status for church schools and argues that this status should enable church schools to teach religious education (RE) to reflect their trust deeds. This could mean teaching RE in accordance with the teaching of their respective denominations. Thus the Christian faith and the Bible should become significant for the theory and practice of Christian education. Using the Bible as the basis of Christian education theory and practice, this section argues along the lines of Beck (1964) that ‘only when we know what man is can we say how

he should be educated' (p. 109). Thus VA status would enable church schools to offer Christian education to prepare human beings for their roles in the created order as God intends. This should involve learning of all the desirable subjects in the school curriculum to discover their nature, identity and purpose in the created order.

#### **6.4.1 The nature of voluntary-aided (VA) schools**

One of the factors which influenced church schools' understanding of their nature was their VA status (see Chapter Two). Examination of the sample schools' VA status revealed the following characteristics:

- The schools are owned by denominational education trusts rather than LEAs
- School governors are Christians, and are appointed by their respective denominations, not by the LEA
- School governors appoint teaching staff, including headteachers, in compliance with the school's perceived nature and mission
- RE is an important aspect of school life and identity and is taught as true, insofar as, it is in accordance with the teachings of the denominations and the Christian faith
- Collective worship is Christian by nature and is central to the daily life of the school. The worship content is reflective of the denominational aegis of the school.

These characteristics (cf. Table 2:1) identify the church schools as a part of the maintained system and provide them with the legal justification to engage in teaching the Christian faith to its pupils. For example, the 1944 Education Act legalised the teaching of denominational RE to registered pupils in denominational schools (section 25:1). However, the same Act prohibited denominational religious instruction (RI) in LEA schools which confirmed the distinctiveness of church schools within the maintained system. The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) also

reinforced the provisions in the 1944 Education Act that church VA schools should teach RE in accordance with their individual trust deeds, which normally and explicitly reflected the teachings of their particular Christian denominations. However, despite the implications of church schools' VA status for teaching and learning, 85% of RC sample schools typically described themselves as follows:

St Wilfrid Roman Catholic High School is a comprehensive school for girls aged 11 – 18 (School prospectus, 2003/4).

The Holy Cross Roman Catholic School is a comprehensive school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years (School prospectus, 2003/4).

These extracts show the omission of voluntary-aided (VA) from the schools' description of their nature which, correctly, raised the question of the reason behind the omission. The explanation for this omission was not evident in the prospectuses but it could be traced back to the 1944 Education Act which created two separate statuses for church schools: voluntary-aided (VA) and voluntary controlled (VC). The VA or VC status of schools depended on the extent of the religious and financial independence that a denomination wanted for its schools (Murphy, 1971). Table 2:1 above summarises the differences between VA and VC statuses. However, the majority of the CoE local parishes preferred VC status because it made lesser financial demands on the parishes than VA did (O'Keeffe, 1988). The RC Church, on the other hand, adopted a unified national policy and opted for VA status for all of its schools. The implication was that, unlike the CoE schools, the RC schools had no need to emphasise their VA status which was implied in the 'RC school'. Therefore, RC schools which advertised their VA statuses were within their right and were

neither more nor less RC than those who chose not to advertise such a status. However, the question of the extent to which VA status contributed to church schools' distinctiveness emerged which required further examination of the schools' prospectuses. Such examination revealed that church schools' VA status could enable them to create a distinctive Christian ethos or environment for teaching and learning. It could also, as discussed above, provide the church schools with the legal justification to develop their education theory and practice based on the Christian understanding of human beings. These two implications are explored in turn in the next few sections.

#### **6.5 The church schools' Voluntary-Aided status and ethos**

Ethos describes the social reality of an institution which is a consequence of its chosen way of operation or way of doing things. Thus ethos is a powerful means of conditioning pupils within an institution to think and act in a particular way. For example, all the church schools investigated for this study required pupils to wear particular school uniforms to distinguish individual schools from others. Thus wearing prescribed uniforms should enable individual denominational schools to exhibit a particular public outlook, attitude and behaviour or to present a particular public image. This prescribed behaviour of the schools could, and should, contribute to their individual ethos which the schools' governors could change at will to shape or mould a particular school's public image. However, there is another side of a school's ethos that cannot be changed at will for an instantaneous public image. This kind of ethos derives from the interpersonal relationships among pupils, teachers and parents.



It depends upon the continuous behaviour and attitudes of the schools' population. Thus belief, culture, norms, assumptions and perceptions of individual pupils are essential for this kind of ethos (Garfinkle, 1968). This makes ethos the 'natural outcome of what is actually happening within the school' (Hogan, 1984, p. 695). The point made here is that ethos of a school could depend on several factors raising the question of whether the church schools' prospectuses could reveal those factors that underpinned their ethos. Hogan pointed out that although ethos concerns social interactions of pupils, it should also enable:

...authorities of the school...view themselves largely as custodians of a set of standards which are to be preserved, defended and transmitted through the agency of schools... (1984, p. 695).

The 1944 Education Act therefore made individual governing bodies of church schools the legal custodians of the Christian or denominational character of their schools. The implication should be that a governing body of a church school would, and should, have a legal duty to ensure that the school worked towards its stated aims and goals, as are expressed in the individual schools' mission statements of which the following are typical examples:

The School endeavours to create a disciplined environment in which its pupils are challenged to pursue excellence, to assume responsibility for their own formation and to grow in leadership, self-confidence, and personal responsibility (St Helen CoE School, 2003/4).

One of the key aspects of our community is ... the creation of an environment in which everyone is valued and cared for...and we work hard to ensure that our provision is top quality (St Clement RC Catholic School, 2003/4).

The type of environment described in these extracts was not exclusive to church schools because LEA schools also purported to provide a similar environment for teaching and learning to occur. The following extracts are typical examples from LEA schools' prospectuses:

We aim to create and sustain a safe and caring environment where all students have opportunities to fulfil their academic, social and creative potential (The Crompton LEA school, 2003/4).

We aim to provide a learning environment that encourages the highest possible personal attainment and achievement so that all individuals fulfil their potential (Norwood LEA school, 2003/4).

These extracts confirm the church and LEA schools' desire to secure a safe, warm and conducive environment for teachers to teach and pupils to learn, indicating that such an environment is an essential condition for any form of education. However, this study could not confirm the environment in reality because of the selected research method, as has been described in Section 5:8. Nevertheless, the prospectuses failed to provide evidence to suggest a significant distinction between the church and LEA schools' proposed environments. The lack of a clear distinction between the two environments could justify the pluralists' claim that the two schools were in reality only the embodiments of different perspectives of a common educational philosophy. Of course, it should be consistent for the church and LEA schools to share a common educational philosophy since they are both part of the maintained system in England. Besides, the church schools' distinctiveness should not always depend on being different from LEA schools, except that critics have dubbed the Christian theology underpinning church schools as incompatible with liberal education (see Section 3:3).

However, while it is consistent for the church and LEA schools to share a common education philosophy, their education theories and practices could, and should, be different, based on the factors that inform or underpin them. The factors underpinning the church schools' education theory and practice, as discussed in Chapters Six and Seven, are such that the church and LEA schools could not provide the same education despite being part of the maintained system (cf. Section 2:4). For example, examination of the church schools' prospectuses revealed that 85% of them claimed to provide a different kind of environment for teaching, learning and nurturing, as is shown in the following extracts:

The mission of this school is to create an environment in which our members will experience a deeply held faith, a commitment to genuine Christian values and a sense of belonging (Bishop Bell CoE School, 2003/4).

St. Paul's is a community of faith echoing St. Paul's letter to Timothy where, as hallmarks of Christian living, St. Paul stresses 'love', 'service' and 'doing the best that is possible' (St Stephen RC School, 2003/4).

Given the percentage of the church schools describing their environments along the lines of these extracts, it could be argued that the majority of the church schools might have recognised the need to provide a Christian environment for Christian education to take place. However, this study could not establish the extent to which the church schools provided a Christian environment for Christian teaching and learning to occur for the reason described in Section 5:8. Another point is that church schools could have perceived their VA status as a legal opportunity to develop a Christian education theory and practice based on the Christian understanding of Man (Beck, 1964). This leads the discussion to the second of the two implications of the

VA status for church schools. As stated above, VA status of the church schools should enable Christian education to develop its theory and practice based on the Christian understanding of Man, as is revealed in the Bible

## **6.6 The Christian concept of Man**

The Christian theological anthropology stems from the following extract from the Bible:

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:26-27).

Three essential features for the Christian understanding of Man are revealed in the text as follows:

1. Man is made in the image of God
2. Man has a special responsibility towards the created order
3. Man is essentially a social being.

These three features are briefly examined in turn to determine their practical implications for Christian education in relation to an individual autonomy and tolerance of difference in society.

### **6.6.1 Man in the image of God**

The text (Genesis 1:26) describes Man as made in the image and likeness of God raising the question of their meaning and implications for Christian education. The exact meaning of the two Hebrew words ‘*tselem*’ (image) and ‘*demut*’ (likeness) have

been debated over the centuries by early Church Fathers, Scholastics, Reformers and modern theologians. The conclusion, however, has been that the two words are used synonymously and interchangeably meaning that they refer to the same thing (Berkhof, 2003). The implication is that Man is best understood in relation to God which makes him a spiritual being, as is expressed in the text below:

Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, *and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*; and the man became a living being (Genesis 2:7).

There is evidence in the Bible that other living things existed in addition to Man which appears to undermine his uniqueness in the created order as a living being: ‘...*to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life...*’ (Genesis 1:30). This confirms the existence of, for example, living things such micro-organisms upwards. However, critical examination of Genesis 1:30 and 2:7 should reveal a remarkable difference between the two texts. For example, Man is the only living being to have God breathe into his nostrils and is made in the image of God. Man therefore stands at the apex of all the created orders. For example, he is crowned as king of the lower creation with dominion over the inferior creatures. As such Man has a duty to make all nature and created beings placed under his rule (Genesis 1:28 and Psalm 8:4-9). Thus Man is ‘to work and take care of it’ [*the created order*] (Genesis 2:15). This should make Man a conscious responsible and autonomous partner with God (2:8-9, 16) and should bolster his capacity either to stay in, or to reject, the partnership with God (Genesis 3:6-7). The question emerging from Man as made in the image of God for Christian education is how to prepare individuals to

recognise their nature in relation to God and to accept their individual responsibilities as stewards of the created order. As discussed in Section 3:3, this study takes the view that Christian education would, and should, teach all desirable subjects within a school's curriculum to provide individuals with the tools and skills necessary for stewarding the created order. Thus no single subject within a school's curriculum and extra-curricular activities should be excluded from preparing pupils to recognise the nature and purpose of their existence. This should also demonstrate that Christian education would not distinguish between religious and secular aspects of education. The question of whether the church schools provided such an education in reality could not be answered by this study due to its selected method for gathering data for examination (Section 5:3). However, there is a debate about the mechanism through which Man came into existence between Christian creationists and evolutionists which falls outside the scope of this study. It is worth noting, nonetheless, that the debate could potentially affect the teaching of, and the learning from, religious education (RE) and the sciences, especially biology, in the church schools. However, Christian education based on the nature of Man as made in the image of God would, and should, enable individual human beings to recognise their nature as understood in relation to God with the task of being God's representative in the created order. Thus the education for Man (Christian education) should prepare him to assume his responsibility within, and for, the created order without coercion. The next section explores Man in relation to his environment and the extent to which such a relationship could inform Christian education.

### 6.6.2 Man in relation to his environment

Man made in the image of God also suggests a mysterious bond or solidarity between him and the environment (created order). This bond is revealed in a variety of ways in the Bible. For example:

1. God's covenant with Man is often associated with a promise of land to Man (Gen 12:7; Exodus 3:7ff).
2. Man's sin brings curse to the given land (Genesis 3:17-18; Deuteronomy 24:4).

Moreover, Man uses a language of his own making to name animals to determine the relationship he should have with individual creatures in the created order. This aspect of Man's capacity should underscore his autonomy in relation to God. Man's autonomy renders his superiority over the animal kingdom beyond dispute. Jesus endorses Man's superiority thus: '*...you are of more value than many sparrows*' (Mt. 10:31). This is also implicit in Jesus' criticism of those quibbling over the healing of a man on the Sabbath but would nevertheless save their own animals on the Sabbath if they fell into a pit (Mt. 12:11). While Man's superiority over the animal kingdom and in the created order is indisputable, he still needs all the necessary tools and skills to protect and advance the created order. Thus Christian education would, and should, prepare individual pupils to fulfil their roles or to assume their responsibilities in the created order through training for specialised and general jobs. This should confirm Christian education as catering for every aspect of Man's life and could not therefore be a threat to social cohesion or tolerance in society. Whether the church schools were successful in their preparation of pupils for their described roles in reality could neither be confirmed nor denied by this study for reason of the selected research

method which could not allow the necessary information to be gathered for examination. Another aspect of Man's responsibility which could, and should, inform the nature of Christian education, is the protection and advancement of social relationships which the next section examines.

### **6.6.3 Man is a social being**

Man made in the image of God portrays him 'as companionable, social beings; of equal dignity; as male and female; an imaging which implies as much about God as communitarian and female as it does about humans' (O'Murchu (1997) quoted in D. McLaughlin, 2003, p. 152). Thus a holistic education should reflect the nature of Man which, according to Christian understanding, is diverse reflecting the nature of God. Christian education should be able to offer a holistic education based on its recognition of the image of God in Man as *male and female*. This diversity within the nature of Man underpins the Christian teaching or understanding of human social relationships in the created order. For example, The Church of England report, '*An Honourable Estate*' (1988), strongly argued that 'the institution of marriage is given by God in creation of human life' (Genesis 2:24). Thus there is an assumption that sexual-intercourse relationship between husband and wife is a means for procreation or raising a family (Genesis 2:25). Stott (1984) has contended that: 'as a husband and a wife, there is no shame involved in becoming 'one flesh' or in consummating their love and procreating their children'. Stott also made the assumption that one-flesh union implied sexual-intercourse between husband and wife with the purpose of procreation. Such an assumption raises the question of whether a lifelong marriage



relationship between husband and wife is prerequisite to one-flesh union advocated in the Biblical narrative. Stuart and Thatcher (1997) doubted marriage of husband and wife as prerequisite to one-flesh union and the union being synonymous with a lifelong heterosexual marriage. Their doubt stemmed from St. Paul's apparent implication that one flesh is achievable through sexual intercourse, irrespective of the marital status of the man and woman involved (1 Corinthians 6:16).<sup>37</sup> They also implied that sexual intercourse between two human beings, irrespective of gender, could achieve one-flesh which could mean the restoration of the 'original pattern of human unity' thus before the creation of woman. The significant point from Stuart and Thatcher's argument was that Christian education could protect and advance social relationships in the created order if it recognised and accommodated differences in human beings' sexual intercourse relationships as reflecting the image of God.<sup>38</sup> This view should raise the question of the ethics of sexual-intercourse relationships in the created order.<sup>39</sup> However, the sequence of events leading to man and woman becoming 'one flesh' in the Genesis narrative could, and should, undermine the argument that sexual intercourse between two human beings irrespective of gender could achieve one-flesh. The events are as follows:

- man should publicly leave his parents to
- man should cleave to his wife [not to any woman or another man].

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<sup>37</sup> St Paul appears to maintain that, as argued by Stuart and Thatcher, a Christian becomes 'one-flesh' with a prostitute if they engaged in sexual intercourse.

<sup>38</sup> Farley, M. (2006, p. 277) has argued that 'there is solid ground for an absolute prohibition or a comprehensive unquestionable blessing for same-sex relationships and actions today...'

<sup>39</sup> Farley, M. (2006), however, argued that 'the justice ethic appropriate to heterosexual relationships is the same justice ethic appropriate to same-sex relationships' (p. 288). This should undermine the implication from Stuart and Thatcher's argument that one-flesh union is irrespective of the sexual practice involved.

Thus sexual-intercourse achieving one-flesh hinges on a man clinging faithfully or cleaving to his wife. Jesus endorses this pattern of achieving one flesh (Mark 10:6) and recommends a lifelong union of husband and wife as the context for one-flesh union to occur (Mark 10:9). The question for Christian education is how to integrate those inclined to other forms of sexual intercourse relationships<sup>40</sup> and remain true to the Christian teaching. There is a view that Christian education and sexual-intercourse relationships, other than the traditional marriage of man and woman, are incompatible or a contradiction in terms. For example, Stuart and Thatcher (1997) called on the church to rethink its teaching and interpretation of one flesh in the Genesis narrative and other Biblical references.<sup>41</sup> However, they correctly observed that a rethink of the traditional Christian view of marriage could be, in their own words: ‘untidy, controversial, divisive and incomplete’ (p. 58). Thus a rethink could be messy but would at least promote social cohesion by recognising and accepting differences. Such a position is a classic example of the ideology of pluralism which declares any views failing to conform to its perception as flawed and undermining social cohesion. Thus pluralism attempts to minimise the differences of two or more opposing views for the sake of theoretical neatness. Tanner succinctly explained the pluralists’ stance thus:

Pluralist generalizations about what all religions have in common conflict with genuine dialogue, in that they prejudge its results. Commonalities, which should be established in and through a process of dialogue, are constructed ahead of time by pluralists to serve as presuppositions of

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<sup>40</sup> According to Stuart and Thatcher (1997, p. 58), ‘these relationships include cohabitations, the partnerships of lesbian women and gay men and sexual relations involving single and post-married people’.

<sup>41</sup> Farley, M (2006) has expressed doubt on some of the few Biblical texts that deal explicitly with homosexuality as to whether they refer to the contemporary understanding of homosexuality (p. 273).

dialogue. Pluralists therefore close themselves to what people of other religions might have to say about their account of these commonalities. Moreover ... a pluralist focus on commonalities slights differences among the religions of the world. The pluralists' insistence on commonalities as a condition of dialogue shows an unwillingness to recognize the depth and degree of diversity among religions, or the positive importance of them (1993, p. 2).

Thus a multicultural or multifaith society would fail to achieve a meaningful social cohesion unless individuals or different groups were allowed the opportunity to negotiate a workable method of resolving their recognised differences. This surely should undermine the pluralists' stance of 'all are saying the same thing' in an attempt to find social cohesion. For example, Stuart and Thatcher and the Christian traditional view of marriage could not be saying the same thing. This might, and should, explain why the attempts to find a workable synthesis of same-sex relationship and the Christian view of one-flesh union are deadlocked.<sup>42</sup> The question for Christian education, however, is the extent to which it should accommodate differences or mitigate intolerance in society. Christian education could argue that the consequences of Man as a social being transcend human sexual-intercourse relationships although important. For example, individuals in the Old Testament (OT), irrespective of their sexual activities, were responsible members of a family, a house, a clan, and a tribe, all of which found their unity in the house of Israel (Joshua 7:16-18). Thus human solidarity should transcend individual sexual intercourse preferences. However, Man could use his autonomy to act against God and to break

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<sup>42</sup> For a detailed discussion on same-sex relationships in relation to the church see the following: Boswell, J. (1980) *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press; Hays, R. B. (1986) 'Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell's Exegesis of Roman 1' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14, pp. 184-215 and their bibliographies.

the relationship between them. The consequences of the broken relationship would be, for example: a disrupted family solidarity resulting in social disorder. For example, as the consequence of the broken relationship between God, Adam and Eve, Cain murdered Abel, his brother (Gen. 4:1-5). Lot selfishly took advantage of his uncle, Abraham (Genesis 13) and Jacob defrauded his brother, Esau (Gen 25:29f). Besides, the OT prophets identified deterioration of morality among the people of Israel, the oppression of the weak, and the ascendancy of those with economic power with the break-up of human solidarity (Amos 5:11-12; 8:4-6; Isaiah 10:1-2; 58:6-7). Thus Christian education could accept other sexual orientations as the result of the broken relationship between God and humanity. St Paul alludes to this assumption in Romans Chapter One which has been vigorously debated over the years.<sup>43</sup> The question of whether or not Christian education could accept or explain certain situations such as homosexuality was one of Marx's objections to Christianity and religion as a whole. For example, Marx saw religion (Christianity hereafter) as one of the causes, *if not the main cause*, of the break down in human solidarity. For him, society was fundamentally corrupt because the balance of economic power had shifted to a minority group. A future society, he argued, should be one devoid of social class and which should offer equal treatment to people in order to achieve greater satisfaction, both at work and in personal relationships, than hitherto. He insisted that Christianity undermined individual autonomy because it prevented individual Christians from seeking a change in things deemed earthly, as is expressed in the following quotation:

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<sup>43</sup> See works cited under footnote 43 and Dale, M. B. (1995) 'Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1:18-31' Biblical Interpretation 3: pp. 332-355.

[Religion] presents man to himself in terms which distort the true ideal of human liberation and conceal the misery of his actual condition (Masterson, 1971, p.87).

Thus Christianity provided justification for the oppression of the weak and the poor by powerful minority with the economic power. He insisted that human beings should move from 'otherworldly' thinking to self-sufficiency to save themselves. Marx accepted the importance of human solidarity for achieving justice for the weak and the poor. However, he was wrong to exclude Christianity as at least one of the means for achieving human solidarity or a fair society for several reasons: First, satisfaction at work is God's gift to humanity from the Christian perspective (Section 6:8:2) and to exclude God from the means for individuals and groups to achieve satisfaction at work would render the inborn desire of humanity unfulfilled. Second, Christian faith advocates a mixed community under Christ which should refute Marx's charge that it contributed to division in society. The next section examines the Christian concept of community and the extent to which church schools could create, or be part of, a mixed community.

### **6.7 The Christian concept of community in relation to church schools**

The term 'community' implies a close affinity between members of a group sharing values, common interests and concerns. These shared values and interests are either innate or chosen (acquired) which the group seeks to pass on to future generations through education. However, in terms of Christianity, community originates from within the nature of Man as revealed in the Bible. For example, Pope John Paul II

expressed a Christian community thus:

Beyond human and natural bonds, already so close and so strong, there is discerned in the light of faith a new model of the unity of the human race, which must ultimately inspire solidarity. This supreme model of unity, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God, one God in three Persons, is what we Christians mean by the word 'communion' (John Paul II, 1987, para 40)

Thus theologically a Christian community should be modelled on the nature of God and stretch beyond a particular geographical region. It should not also be dependent upon the constituents of a gathering, for example, of people from a diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds in a particular area. Rather, it should thrive on, or be mediated by, the shared values, beliefs or interests of the individuals in the group, as is advocated by Dewey (1916, p. 5):

Men live in a community in virtue of the things which they have in common; and communication is the way in which they come to possess things in common.

Thus a Christian community should be more than a group of people gathered in a church building, school, village, town or nation. It should consist of individuals around the world who profess faith in God through Christ. This means that a Christian community would consist of people from a variety of social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds with belief in God through Christ as the uniting factor. The implication should be that a Christian community would acknowledge, respect, and honour the variety of human experience, implying as it does, the identity and dignity of each person as bound up with the quality of the relationships within the community (cf. Boswell, 1996). This community would encourage solidarity among its members

including rich and poor, strong and weak, men and women and so on to reflect the ministry of Jesus. Thus the church community should show concern for the socially-deprived, the poor and the needy, the deaf, the blind and the lame (Mt. 11:4f). It should accommodate the despised and minority groups such as sinners and tax collectors (Mt. 11:19), and seek to bring them into the community (Mt. 21:31). Individual members of this Christian community should be expected to be merciful (Mt 5:7), to be peacemakers (5:9), to be a light to illuminate others (5:16), to avoid anger, adultery and divorce (5:17); to be absolutely truthful (5:33); to share their cloak with the more needy (5:40); and even to love their enemies (5:44). The attitudes and actions of members should take into account their personal responsibilities within the community (Mt. 25:31-46) confirming their individual autonomy. These indisputably prove that the Christian community would, and should, welcome people from all backgrounds including those of different sexual-intercourse orientations. For example, Jesus welcomes the Samaritan woman cohabiting with a man (John 4:18) and the woman caught in adultery (John 8:1-11). However, there is evidence in the Bible that there was a changed in the women's lives after their encounter with Jesus. For example, the Samaritan woman went and testified about the distinctiveness of Jesus whereas the woman caught in adultery was urged not to sin again. The change of emphasis in the lives of those who respond to Jesus defines the newness of the community which Jesus: calls His 'little flock' (Luke 12:32), died for (1 Peter 2:24-25) in order to make a new covenant with it in His blood (Mark 14:24). As such all forms of enmity such as social, cultural and ethnic divisions should be removed from this community (Galatians 3:28). This study could not provide any evidence to

suggest that the church schools investigated for this study were a model Christian community as is described above for the simple reason that the research method selected for this study could not allow that to happen (see Section 5:8). However, the following observation can be made from the concept of community from the Christian perspective. The nature of Christian community resonates with the mission of the church which is summed up in Section 6:3 (pp. 158-9). Thus a Christian community is for all human beings who respond to Jesus and live a life modelled on Him. The question for this study was the extent to which the church schools shared the mission of the church in building this Christian community. Examination of the schools' prospectuses (mission statements) revealed that church schools might have considered themselves as individual Christian communities, as is shown in the extracts below:

The school is a community of faith with Jesus Christ at its centre where prayer is part of our daily lives...We show concern and respect for individuals, valuing each member of our school community as a unique person created in God's image and loved by Him. While encouraging pupils to become young Christian adults who have a love and appreciation of their own faith, we also help them to have an understanding of and respect for other traditions and faiths. Our aim at all times is to recognise Jesus Christ as 'the Truth' and it is only by believing in Him, and by making Him the centre of our lives, that we can ever be completely happy and completely free (St Saviour CoE School, 2003/2004).

The school is...a place of integral education...of which Christ is the foundation... its mission of education as a work of love, its service to society...which characterises the educating community (St Rita RC School, 2003/2004).

Whether the church schools were able to exhibit the characteristics revealed in these extracts could not be confirmed by this study. The reason for this has been stated in



various sections of this chapter that the selected research method for this study could not allow the gathering of the necessary information through observation or otherwise. However, such evidence was available through Ofsted inspection reports of the sample schools, examples of which are as follows:

Many students come from areas of significant deprivation. Three-quarters are from minority ethnic backgrounds. Most of these are Black Caribbean or Black African, but one fifth are refugees, predominantly from Turkey, and a small number are from Asian backgrounds. More than a third of students have English as an additional language, though only two are at an early stage of learning English. Almost half are eligible for free school meals, which is well above average. Three hundred and thirty students have special educational needs. Forty-three of these have statements, which is well above average. Of 78 students with more significant special needs, 17 have emotional and behavioural difficulties, one is autistic, nine have communication difficulties and the rest have learning difficulties (St Augustine CoE School, Ofsted Report, 2004).

The school draws pupils from a wide ethnic background. This includes about 60 nationalities and 80 languages. (St Brendan RC School, Ofsted Report, 2005).

These extracts should confirm church schools as communities of pupils from diverse backgrounds and thereby affirming their comprehensive status or nature to which the discussion now turns.

## **6.8 The nature of church schools as comprehensive**

This section examines the nature of church schools as comprehensive and its implication for Christian education (Section 6:9) offered to their pupils. It argues that the comprehensive nature of the church schools stems from the Christian concept of Man as made in the image of God and its use of church-affiliation criterion in the schools' admissions policies. It refutes the charge that church schools cream off

bright and wealthy pupils from LEA schools which could undermine their comprehensive status. It argues that church schools are similar to local education authority (LEA) schools in terms of their locations, free school meals (FSM) consumption, Special Education Need (SEN) and truancy records. The thrust of this section is that certain Christian values could have instigated the low FSM consumption, and the high academic capacity of the church schools. Finally, it maintains that church schools could legitimately claim to provide nurturing for human beings to take up the stewardship of the created order through Christian education. The next section explores the factors that make church schools comprehensive.

#### **6.8.1 The basis of church schools' status as comprehensive**

All the sample schools investigated in this study declared their status as comprehensive raising the question of its significance for Christian education. This comprehensive status was partly rooted in the historical development of comprehensive education in England but was mainly on the Christian understanding of the individual equality before God (Section 6:6:4). Reports such as Hadow (1926) and Norwood (1943), which preceded the 1944 Education Act, had argued for pupils to be allocated to schools in accordance with their academic abilities in order to provide them with appropriate education. While there was nothing controversial about this argument, the underlying assumption was that human intelligence was fixed and could be assessed by test scores in English, arithmetic and verbal reasoning,

such as were used in ‘eleven-plus’ examinations.<sup>44</sup> The outcome of such tests determined the types of secondary schools allocated to young people as described below:

1. Grammar schools for pupils deemed academic (the main route to university)
2. Vocational schools providing training for the technically-minded pupils
3. Secondary-modern schools for providing basic education (Gardner, 2000).

While the 1944 Education Act made provision for all children to have access to secondary-school education, it also, either implicitly or explicitly regarded the worth of an individual pupil as measured by an academic achievement. In view of this assumption, the church VA schools could have emphasised their comprehensive nature as a public rejection of:

- The valuation of a person’s worth and dignity by academic achievements.
- The charge that they were discriminatory, selective and divisive (Chapter one).

Another series of reports in the 1960s such as the Beloe (1960) and a House of Commons motion (1965) called for the abolition of selection at the ‘eleven-plus’ stage. The Plowden Report (1967) challenged the traditional approach to education and argued for a child-centred education. Plowden’s view was that ‘at the heart of educational progress lies the child’ (ibid., p. 7). Thus the well-being of the child was to be the determinant of education theories and good practice. These reports about how children learned formed the backdrop of the 1976 Education Act. This Act

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<sup>44</sup> Section 7:5 provides a detailed discussion on the question of whether intelligence is fixed.

authorised the Secretary of State for Education to compel LEAs to submit plans for a comprehensive system of secondary schooling and for the abolition of grammar and secondary-modern schools. The comprehensive system ensured that every child had an equal opportunity to realise his or her full potential over a wide range of subjects and skills. Thus every child, irrespective of socio-economic, cultural, ethnic background and academic ability, could have an equal access to education. The aim of the comprehensive system resonated with that of Christian education which the next section explores.

#### **6.8.2 Implications of church schools' comprehensive status for Christian education**

The comprehensive nature of church schools could, and should, enable them to be schools of, and for, all people making it consistent with the Christian community (Section 6:7). The church-affiliation criterion within the church schools' admissions policies should ensure that pupil intake reflected the human nature as unity in diversity. For example, *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1998) (CSTTM) asserted that 'The Catholic school set out to be a school for the human person and of the human person' (para. 9). With this assertion, the church schools' declaration of their comprehensive status might have conveyed the important message of equality, openness and the dignity of Man before God. Thus the schools could have been for those wanting to develop their innate and acquired gifts and skills to advance the created order, as God intended. However, critics of church schools such as Hinsliff (2001) challenged church schools' claim to be the school for all human beings by arguing thus: the church-affiliation criterion in church schools'

admissions policies was a ploy for selecting bright pupils of middle class background. She based her argument on the percentages of pupils in receipt of FSM and of those deemed to have statements of SEN in church schools, in comparison with the percentages for the LEA schools. These two quantifiable factors were generally regarded as the two common measurements of 'social disadvantage' among schools' pupil intake. She recorded that, while the national average of pupils receiving FSM in primary schools was 17.6% in 2001, it was 16.1% and 11.5% in Roman Catholic and the Church of England (CoE) schools respectively. Similarly, the average percentage of pupils deemed to have statements of SEN (2.2%) in church schools was lower than the national average of (2.5%). The significance of the given statistics was that, nationally, a lower percentage of pupils consumed FSM in church schools than were in LEA schools. The statistics also showed that the percentage of pupils deemed to have SEN was lower than that in LEA schools. Thus the statistics presented a picture of church schools admitting fewer people with social and academic problems than did the LEA schools. The overall thrust of Hinsliff's argument contradicted the one emerged from the figures extracted from Ofsted inspection reports in Table 6.1. Given the two contrasting assessment of church schools' socio-economic backgrounds of their pupil intake, it was important to investigate the validity of the allegations that the church schools had creamed off wealthy and bright pupils from LEA schools. The investigation revealed some evidence that could corroborate Hinsliff's claim about church schools. For example, the average numbers of pupils receiving FSM and deemed to have statements of SEN, were 13.2% and 2.3% respectively in church schools in 2003/4, as compared to the national averages of

15% and 2.5%. However, certain fundamental data needed to be examined and considered, before accepting or rejecting Hinsliff's charge against church schools.

The data examined included percentages of pupils:

- eligible for FSM
- on the SEN register
- receiving five or more grade A\*-C at GCSE
- taking unauthorised absences from school

Such data were available in the latest Ofsted inspection reports on each of the sample schools. Table 6:2 summarises the data obtained from the CoE, RC and LEA sample schools for examination.

**Table 6.2**

**Socio-economic backgrounds of CoE, RC and LEA sample schools**

School Type	CoE %	Roman Catholic %	LEA %
Schools in deprived area	85	87.5	77.5
Equal or above the national average of FSM	45	40	47.5
Equal or above the national average of 5 or more A*-C	47.5	80	40
Equal or above the national average of SEN statement	25	37.5	55
Equal or above the national average of unauthorised absences	35	7.5	45

**[Source: Socio-economic backgrounds reported by Ofsted inspectors 2001-2006]**

Table 6:2 paints a picture of even spread of the CoE, RC and LEA schools in socially-deprived areas in the Inner and Outer London leading to the conclusion that there was little or no difference between them. The spread of schools with above the national average of pupils receiving FSM also followed a similar trend although the percentage of the RC schools was much lower than those of the CoE and LEA

schools. However, the table shows that the RC schools had twice as many more pupils achieving the national average of grade A\*-C passes at GCSE than both CoE and LEA schools. This raised the question of the possible underlying causes. Given the figures in Table 6.2, either some internal or external factors might have caused the significant rise in the RC schools' academic performances (cf. Section 6:3). Special Education Needs could not have been one of those factors because the CoE schools, which had fewer pupils with statements of SEN than RC schools, could only achieve half of what the RC schools achieved at GCSE. It was noteworthy, however, that only a few RC schools had above the national average of unauthorised absences. The CoE and LEA schools, on the other hand, had five and seven times more schools, respectively, with above the national average of unauthorised absences than the RC schools. Table 6:2 clearly shows that some unquantifiable internal factors might have contributed to high pupils' attendances. This might have also played a major role in the schools academic achievements. It could also be possible that church schools, especially those of the RC, skewed their pupil intake in favour of parents who, evidently, encouraged their children to attend school. However, a detailed examination of the individual schools, when compared 'like-with-like', painted a different picture from the figures of the collective denominational sample schools (Table 6:2) and the nationwide schools. For example, all the sample schools in LEA 7 (Appendix E) were selected for 'like-with-like' comparisons, as is shown in Table 6:3. The table shows the schools from LEA 7 in a descending order of their average percentages of five or more grade A\*-C passes at GCSE. The schools were examined in groups of three to form: top, middle and bottom groups of schools. The first

anomaly from the examination of the groups requiring explanation was the variations in the FSM consumption, percentages of pupils achieving five or more grade A\*-C, and percentages of pupils with SEN in schools located in the same socio-economic and LEA areas. The data for each group of schools were examined in turn to attempt to explain the variations. The three schools in the top group (a CoE, a Roman Catholic and an LEA) were all located in areas described by Ofsted inspectors as socially-advantaged: ‘Socio-economically, the intake is well above average’ (Ofsted Report, 2004). However, as is shown in Table 6:3, the LEA school had the lowest percentage of the three schools of pupils receiving FSM (4.7%), followed by the CoE (5.8%) and Roman Catholic (6.5%) schools. Examination of the prospectuses of these three schools revealed that their admissions policies might have contributed to the variations in the factors identified. For example, the LEA school’s admissions policy appeared restrictive in terms of its use of ‘catchment area’ criterion. Thus pupil-intake for the LEA school fully reflected its socially-advantaged location. On the other hand, the CoE and the RC Church schools’ use of church-affiliation criterion in their admissions policies might have encouraged socially mixed pupil intake including some pupils from outside their locations (see Section 6:3:4). These three schools (top group) painted a picture which raised the significant question of the extent to which SEN and poor academic performance<sup>45</sup> were natural outcomes of receiving FSM. This was a very difficult question for this study because the selected research method could not allow collecting information deemed necessary.

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<sup>45</sup> This is based on the percentage of pupils achieving five or more grade A\*-C passes at GCSE.



**Table 6:3****Socio-economic backgrounds of the individual schools in LEA 7**

<b>School</b>	<b>FSM (%)</b>	<b>A*-C (%)</b>	<b>SEN (%)</b>	<b>UA (%)</b>	<b>SE</b>
St George (CoE)	5.8	88	1.2	0.1	A
Broomhill (LEA)	4.7	78	2.0	0.3	A
Holy Family (Roman Catholic)	6.5	74	1.1	0.1	A
St Gabriel (Roman Catholic)	5.9	68	1.2	0.4	M
St Francis (Roman Catholic)	5.4	66	12.1	0.3	M
Beaumont (CoE)	12.1	55	16.5	0.7	M
Stanborough (LEA)	10	49	1.4	0.4	A
Breckfield (LEA)	7.9	42	1.5	1.5	A
St Peter and St Paul (CoE)	16.5	41	11.4	1.5	M

Free school meal (FSM); Five or more grade A\*-C passes at GCSE (A\*-C); Special Education Needs (SEN); Unauthorised absence (UA) Socially-advantaged pupil intake (A) Schools with half of their pupil intake from socially-disadvantaged area (M)

However, it could be argued that while FSM consumption and the percentage of SEN in the schools might have contributed to their academic performances, they could not have been natural outcomes of poor academic performance. For example, Table 6:3 shows that the CoE school performed better at GCSE (88%) than the LEA school (78%) despite having lower percentage of pupils receiving FSM. The Roman Catholic school with more pupils receiving FSM (6.5%) than the CoE and the LEA schools did was not far behind (74%) the LEA school. It was therefore concluded that the two church schools in the top group could not have, and had not, creamed off bright and wealthy pupils from the LEA school. The schools in the middle group also painted a different picture of church schools from that of Hinsliff and Table 6:2. However, the absence of an LEA school made a like-with-like comparison impossible. The bottom group schools (2 LEA and 1 CoE) had lower than the national average grade A\*-C

passes at GCSE. The LEA schools had significantly lower percentages of pupils receiving FSM (4.9% and 10%) than did the CoE school (16.5%). Since all the three schools' locations were described as socially favourable, it could be concluded that the high percentage of pupils receiving FSM in the church school could have been a consequence of its admissions policy. Thus church affiliation criterion in church schools' admissions policies, as discussed in Section 6:3:1, could have allowed pupil intake from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. The following conclusions were made in the light of the examination of the schools in LEA 7:

- schools do not necessarily perform better academically by virtue of their locations
- some church schools, if not all, encounter similar problems to those of LEA schools.

These conclusions are consistent with those of Professor Jesson's (2006) on CoE schools, as is given below:

This Report has shown, quite clearly, that Church of England schools are very similar in the kinds of 'disadvantage' they serve to the other schools in the community... there was almost an identity between Church of England schools and others in their proportions of 'highly disadvantaged' communities that they served... information about SEN and 'special needs' pupils provides further evidence about the representativeness of pupils attending Church of England schools...

This conclusion could also be applicable to RC schools, however, the question of the variations in the academic performances between church and LEA schools still remained. This should confirm that the factors contributed to church schools' academic success could be internal and religious. For example, Grace (2002) has correctly argued that professionalism of teachers and headteachers coupled with their

individual spiritual capital (Section 4:5) might have contributed to church schools academic success. Reed, *et al.* (2002) provided empirical evidence to show that the Christian headteachers and teachers in their study were sustained by their individual Christian faith in raising standards in failing schools (Section 4:3). Based on this, church schools could, and should, refute Hinsliff's charge and argue that they form Christian communities which should welcome pupils from diverse backgrounds; and that factors other than pupils' socio-economic backgrounds contributed to the FSM consumption in them. For example, the church, or the Christian teaching about work and responsibility, could have had a major impact on Christian parents' attitude towards FSM consumption. The next section explores the Christian teaching about work and responsibility and its possible impact on FSM consumption.

### **6.8.3 Christian understanding of work and its implications for Christian education**

As the superiority of Man is affirmed in the created order (Section 6:6:2), so are his responsibilities. For example, God puts Man in charge of the created order to take care of it, confirming work for the Christian as a God-given duty and purpose for humanity (Genesis 2:8, 15). As such Jesus provides the model for the Christian in relation to His work as a carpenter (Mk 6:3). St. Paul, another significant figure in the history of the church, follows the example of Jesus to work to earn his living (Acts 18:3). More than once St Paul claims to have supported himself by his own labours (Acts 20:34; 1 Thessalonians 2:9). He therefore encourages Christians to work with their own hands and to avoid depending on others, and by so doing, command respect of outsiders (I Thessalonians 4:11-12). He discourages idleness, people deliberately

refusing to work, and declares that those who do not work are not entitled to eat (II Thessalonians 3:10). This is because as Stott (1984, p. 262) maintains:

Work is the expenditure of energy (manual or mental or both) in the service of others, which brings fulfilment to the worker, benefit to the community and, glory to God.

Thus work could be a form of worship and a means of glorifying God as long as it contributes to the advancement of God's purpose for humanity in the created order (1 Corinthians 10:31). A Christian therefore glorifies God by discharging his or her social responsibility in the Christian and the wider communities. The implication is that to earn a living to maintain or to provide for, one's family is one of the means through which a Christian can glorify God and find personal fulfilment. It is not surprising then that St. Paul admonishes Christians to owe nothing to anyone except to 'love one another...' (Romans 13:8). This does not mean that Christians automatically earn enough money to pay for all essentials of life including school meals. However, some individual Christians might find receiving social benefits such as FSM incompatible with their individual value systems. This could be consistent with, for example, some individual older people who, rightly or wrongly, would rather go hungry or cold than to sign up to the state social means-tested benefits. Similarly, some Christians, rightly or wrongly, find the receipt of some state benefits, including FSM, incompatible with either their individual value or the Christian belief system. Thus the fact of low take-up of FSM in church schools investigated might not be reflective of a more privileged social status and income as an Ofsted inspector noted about the Holy Trinity School in LEA 13 (Appendix E):

The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is below the national average, but according to the school the correct figure may be higher than this as many families choose not to claim (Holy Trinity CoE School, Ofsted Report, 2003).

The reason for the low consumption of FSM in church schools could be more complex than the national figures indicated. However, as it has been declared in many occasions in this study, the research method could not permit this researcher to collect information that might have provided the underlying causes for the low consumption of FSM in church schools. Thus the national picture of FSM consumption in church schools, as advocated by Hinsliff, could be misleading since it failed to take into account certain plausible internal factors, such as an individual religious value system, identified in this study. Moreover, as is shown in Table 6:3, a close like-with-like examination of the sample schools showed a striking similarity in the socio-economic backgrounds of pupils in church and LEA schools. These findings should undermine many of the assumptions made about the underlying factors of church schools' high academic performance by critics. Furthermore, the Christian concept of individual uniqueness before God and the belief that each individual could be at a different stage of Christian spirituality at a given period, could confirm the church schools' pupil intake as more diverse than the information contained in the available data (cf. Section 6:3:4). These considerations, for example, the diverse nature of church schools' pupil intake should justify church schools' status as comprehensive. Thus church schools could, and should, legitimately claim to be a school for human beings to be nurtured for the fulfilment of their individual roles in the created order. This should identify and confirm the role of Christian education as building

communities for the sustenance of human solidarity raising the question of the nature of Christian education.

## **6.9 The nature of Christian education**

The foundation of Christian education could be described as based on the Scripture, which according to St. Paul, ‘is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness’ and, *to equip Man* ‘for every good work’ (2 Timothy 3:16). The characteristics revealed in the text do not directly describe education as offered in church schools; however, they could and should provide an insight into the underlying values of the Christian education<sup>46</sup> theory and practice. Thus Christian education should offer a means for deconstructing and reconstructing the character of a human being. As such this study can confirm the list below as some of the main salient features of Christian education:

1. enabling pupils to realise that: they are like God, they possess the ‘breath’ of God, and they represent God in the created order
2. teaching that Man has a special relationship with God that distinguishes him from the animal kingdom
3. developing the innate intelligence of Man to reach its maximum potential
4. fostering relationships among pupils
5. enabling pupils to be environmentally aware

The implication should be that Christian education could, and should not distinguish between religious and non-religious aspects of education but rather; it should encourage the teaching and learning of all desirable subjects. Thus Christian education should enable pupils to acquire skills and tools needed to safeguard the

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<sup>46</sup> The nature of Christian education is explored in Section 6:9

created order and to develop and protect social relationships within it. This should make church schools a place where relationships between God and Man, man and man, and Man and his environment should be nurtured and sustained. However, as has been consistently stated in this study, the adopted research method could not allow collecting information that might have addressed the question of whether such relationships were formed. Nevertheless, Christian education based on the Christian understanding of Man should provide the fundamental theological rationale for this study to assert that the primary distinguishing characteristic of Christian education is to create a Christian community (see Section 6:7; cf. CSTTM, 1977; 1982; 988). Thus Christian education should aspire to the principles underpinning Christian community which should include (i) solidarity with the oppressed, (ii) distributive justice, (iii) power sharing and, (iv) basic human rights. *The Catholic School on the Threshold of the Third Millennium* (1998), for example, put these aspirations of Christian education in the context of RC (church) schools as follows:

...a school for all, with special attention for those who are the weakest ... is thus confronted with children and young people who have lost all sense of meaning in life and lack any type of inspiring ideal, those to whom no values are proposed and who do not know the beauty of faith, who come from families which are broken and incapable of love, often living in situations of material and spiritual poverty, slaves to the new idols of a society which not infrequently promises them only a future of unemployment and marginalisation. To the new poor, the Catholic school turns in a spirit of love. Spurred on by the aim of offering to all, and especially to the poor and marginalised, the opportunity of an education, of training for a job, of human and Christian formation, it can and must find in the context of the old and new forms of poverty that original synthesis of ardour and fervent dedication which is a manifestation of Christ's love for the poor, the humble, the masses seeking for truth. (para. 15)

Based on the nature of Christian education, Dearing (2001) correctly asserted thus: ‘No church school can be considered as part of the Church mission unless it is distinctively Christian’. However, as has been shown in Sections 6:5:3 – 6:5:5, the church schools’ admissions policies should confirm their understanding of their distinctive nature and role within the mission of the church. It has also been shown in Section 6:7 that Christian education contributes to the process of enabling human beings to discover the meaning and purpose of their existence. Based on this, the Biblical basis of Christian education may be summarised as follows:

- the universe has been created by a personal and triune God (Gen. 1:2) who exists (Heb. 11:6) and is the agency by which everything else is measured and held together (Col. 1:17)
- human beings are uniquely made in the image of God and enjoy a special relationship with the Creator and creatures (Gen 1:26)
- human beings have a God-given responsibility to care for God’s creation (Gen 1:26-28)
- human beings rebelled against God and brought sin and death into the world, which led to broken relationships between God and man, between man and man and between man and the environment (Rom. 5:12-14)
- God became a human being and lived in His world in Jesus Christ (John 1:14) to show humanity the way to restore the broken relationship between them and Himself
- God in Jesus died on the Cross to bring humanity back to its intended place – with God (2 Corinthians 5:19)
- individual human beings need to recognise the work of Jesus on the cross as the means of reuniting humanity with God and entering into an eternal (unbroken) relationship with God. (John 3:16-19; 5:24; 14:21, 23-24; Acts 4:10-12)
- Christians therefore have a God-given duty to educate the world about God’s redemptive process through every form of agency, whether schools, churches or other Christian organisations.

## **6.10 Conclusion**

This chapter concludes that church schools understood their nature, and expressed it in their prospectuses as denominationally-based, voluntary-aided and comprehensive.



Each aspect of their nature could, and should, define the schools' role in the mission of the church. As denominational schools, they could provide an environment for the Christian Gospel to reach many young people and their parents. The VA status could, and should, also provide the schools with an opportunity to use RE as a forum for pupils with or without faith to explore religion, especially Christianity critically. It should also afford them the opportunity to enable pupils to relate the acquired theoretical knowledge through RE to practice in the form of Christian worship. Moreover, the opportunity that VA status afforded to the schools should enable pupils to learn from one another through the witness by word or action of their peers. However, there should be no room for individual or group manipulation, which is incompatible with the Christian faith. The comprehensive status of church schools stemmed from the Christian understanding of Man in the image of God which should enable an acceptance of differences as equal before God. Thus church schools recognised individuals and their skills as equally important for the maintenance and protection of the created order. The next chapter explores the significance or the implication of the church schools' expressed understanding of their nature for Christian education and tolerance in society.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **MAIN INVESTIGATION (2): THE CHURCH SCHOOLS' ROLE IN THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

## **7.1 Introduction**

This section explores the significance and the implication of church schools' understanding of their nature as denominational, voluntary-aided and comprehensive for Christian education. These three identified aspects of the church schools' nature have revealed that the schools:

- Could, and should, have a distinctive Christian outlook based on their trust deeds, reflecting the Christian Bible and be taught as true
- Were legally justified as maintained Christian schools, to formulate their distinctive admissions policies and to prepare pupils to discover their identity in relation to God
- Could, and should, contribute to tolerance based on the acceptance of social, academic, spiritual and cultural differences of their pupil intake.

Thus church schools should be distinctive in terms of their approach to, and purpose of, education which should teach all desirable subjects in the school curriculum in a Christian environment. This approach should enable church schools to provide pupils with the skills and tools deemed necessary for the stewardship of the created order. The purpose should also enable the schools to prepare pupils in an environment conducive to spiritual, social, academic and cultural developments. The significant question for this chapter, therefore, is the extent to which church schools' nature could, and should, inform the Christian education theory (teaching and learning) and practice (social life).

## **7.2 Christian education and spiritual development**

The Christian understanding of Man examined in Section 6:6 revealed Man as a spiritual being with a spiritual relationship with God. Thus Man's spirituality and its development should be inextricably linked with Christian education. The proposed

link between human spirituality and Christian education should raise the question of the compatibility between the development of Christian spirituality and the church schools in the maintained system (see Section 7:4). As discussed in Chapter Three, critics of church schools have argued that the emphasis on the development of Christian spirituality in the church schools undermined their capacity to provide liberal education, which LEA schools, by implication, have the capacity to deliver. However, Chapter Three concluded that the church schools by nature should provide liberal education because Christian spirituality considers an individual voluntary decision as an essential factor for its growth. Thus coercion or manipulation could, and should, not be involved in Christian spirituality, making it compatible with the requirements of liberal education. Moreover, *The Education Reform Act* (ERA) (1988) identified pupils' spiritual development as one of the main aims of education in England and Wales. However, the ERA failed to provide a definition for spiritual development in education. The nearest to a definition was the attempted distinction made between spiritual education or development and religion. The Ofsted's *Framework for the Inspection of Schools' document* (1995), for example, referred to spiritual development thus:

Spiritual development relates to that aspect of inner life through which pupils acquire insights into their personal existence which are of enduring worth. It is characterised by reflection, the attribution of meaning to experience, valuing a non-material dimension to life and intimations of enduring reality.

This extract accepts human beings' innate spiritual need whose satisfaction is beyond themselves and the material world. Thus spiritual development should be a process by

which human beings should seek to understand their nature, meaning and purpose of their existence without reference to a divine being and, for that matter, religion. Based on this understanding, the Ofsted proposed contexts in which spiritual development in maintained schools should be inspected and assessed as follows:

- the values and attitudes schools uphold and foster
- the contribution made by the whole curriculum, RE, acts of collective worship and other assemblies
- extra-curricular activities, together with the general ethos and climate of schools

These proposed contexts suggest that every aspect of a school's life could contribute to spiritual education without a particular reference to religion. The role of religion in spiritual education has been debated extensively with varying conclusions. For example, writers such as Beck (1998); Carr (1995); Haydon (1998) and Wringe (1998) have argued for distinction between spiritual education and religion. However, Long (1998) disputed the proposed distinction on the basis that the term 'spiritual' could be defined or interpreted in a variety of ways, and that it was difficult, if not impossible, to maintain such a distinction. For example, Long maintained that the term 'spiritual' had a clear Christian connotation in relation to the 1944 Education Act (law). This Act and others of 1988 and 1996, for example, required all maintained schools (church schools included) to provide RE and acts of worship for all their registered pupils. However, church schools were particularly required to make those provisions in accordance with their trust deeds which were explicitly Christian in content (see Section 2:3, p. 13). Thus the stated Education Acts provided the legal basis for denominational or Christian RE and worship in church schools.

The implication was that the teaching of, and learning from, RE were important aspects of spiritual education in both church and LEA schools, confirming the difficulty in distinguishing between spiritual education and religion. However, Carr (1995, p. 84) was correct to resist RE as one dimensional vehicle for spiritual education in schools for the reason expressed below:

...for this would suggest, contrary to some of our deepest intuitions, that spiritual development is only available to those who are able to subscribe to some form of or other of religious faith.

Thus Carr suggested ‘where... [*one*]...might reasonably look for a distinctive and viable account of the character of spiritual education...’ (p. 84). This meant that RE should not have the monopoly for the provision of spiritual education. He correctly cited the arts – literature, poetry, drama, painting, and music - as one area of the school curriculum with a strong claim to be a vehicle of spiritual education, as is shown in the quotation below:

Spiritual education is likely to be most effective in schools which take religious education and the arts seriously, to the extent that religious aspirations and artistic achievements are vigorously encouraged, appreciated and celebrated within the school community (Carr, p. 97).

Carr took the view that a combination of RE and aesthetic education was more likely to provide spiritual education than RE on its own. Witz (1996, pp. 598-99) also identified the sciences as another area of the curriculum which could ‘communicate values through...an individual’s regard to life, their daily experiences, the universe and higher values of the self which include moral, ethical, religious, metaphysical, aesthetic, spiritual, and mystical questions’. The identification of these aspects of the

schools' curricula as possible vehicles of spiritual education suggested that the whole of the school curriculum could, and should, be a vehicle for spiritual education. This could also mean that, for example, pupils exercising their legal right to withdraw from RE lessons would still receive spiritual education from other areas of the school curriculum. Critics such as White (1995), however, went further to argue that 'schools could find in aesthetic education ...a powerful alternative to religious education' (p. 18). Thus the elimination of RE from the school curriculum and, for that matter, education in general, would make no difference to the provision of spiritual education in maintained schools. The argument that the absence of RE made no difference to spiritual education could be the basis of the dubious charge of indoctrination levelled against the church schools which emphasised a significant role of RE in developing Christian spirituality (O'Keeffe, 1992; Leach, 1989; Halstead, 1995; Francis, Astley, and Wilcox, 1992). The same argument could have also informed the so-called 'confessional' and 'open' or 'educational' approaches to RE in the church and LEA schools respectively. However, the acceptance of these approaches to RE in church and LEA schools would endorse the charge that RE was a vehicle of indoctrination in church schools. Besides, the law, in the form of the 1996 Inspection Act, specifically required the church schools to nurture Christian spirituality in their pupils. For example, Section 23 of the 1996 Act required that the inspection of RE, collective worship, and ethos should be based on their contribution to spiritual and moral education of pupils in accordance with the schools' trust deeds. Thus the Act recognised the role of RE in Christian spirituality or Christian education and made provision for its inspection and assessment. The legal provision for RE to

be used as a vehicle of Christian spirituality in the church schools should confirm the need for different environments for the development of spirituality in education in both the church and LEA schools. However, the limitations of the research method chosen for this study, as described in Section 5:8, could not allow this study to confirm the actual environment in which Christian spirituality was developed in church schools. Nevertheless, the criteria for determining the appropriate environment for Christian spirituality should stem from the nature or definition of Christian spirituality, which McGrath (1999) defined thus:

Christian spirituality concerns the quest for a fulfilled and authentic Christian existence, involving the bringing together of the fundamental ideas of Christianity and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of the Christian faith (p. 2).

Thus Christian spirituality concerns individuals living out the experience of Christ or faith in action. Based on McGrath's definition, church schools would have to create an environment conducive to Christian education. Newbigin (1989) made the important point that Christian spirituality should take place in its proper context which is in relation to God, the environment and social relationships (cf. Section 6:6:3). A similar concern was behind the London Conference on Spiritual and Moral Development organised by the Schools Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) in 1996. Tate, the then Chief Executive of the SCAA, recognised that the diversity of conceptions of the good life in LEA schools made it difficult to create a proper context for developing pupils' spirituality. The conference's agenda expressed Tate's concerns thus:



The issues we are here to discuss are not just ones for schools. Moral and spiritual education is only possible if the society, which maintains these schools, is clear about its ends ... As the statutory custodian of the school curriculum...Our objective today is to come up with an agenda for action (Tate, 1996, pp. 1f).

Thus multiple conceptions of the good life meant a diversity of goals for spiritual education or spirituality in the maintained schools. He therefore argued for specific national values to inform the nature of spiritual education and the educative process as a whole. Thus Tate wanted the education story to fit into a unifying human story which, from the Christian perspective, is told in relation to God (see Section 6:6f). The Christian story upon which Christian education is based recognises that God, the creator, has the master plan of human life which should determine the nature of education. “For I know the plans I have for you, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). Thus ‘...God...made the world and everything in it...he...gives to all men life and breath and everything ... In him we live and move and have our being’ (Acts 17:24-25, 28). This should confirm the nature and purpose of Man as underpinning Christian education. Thus Christian education should have the purpose of enabling pupils to discover God’s master plan for human life within the created order. This could mean that the search for the meaning and the purpose of human existence (spiritual education) without its proper context - a relationship with God - would fail. This confirms Dearing’s argument that church schools should be distinctively Christian in order to participate in the mission of the church or to create an environment for Christian spirituality. However, as has been consistently stated in this study, the research method chosen for this investigation could not allow the necessary observation to confirm or deny whether

the sample church schools provided Christian environment for the development of Christian spirituality. Having argued thus, examination of the schools' prospectuses revealed that 94% of the sample church schools specifically emphasised one aspect of their mission as the development of pupils' spirituality, as is evident in the following typical examples:

To provide for students and staff a Christian setting in which to experience the Gospel, to grow, explore and nourish their faith lived out at home, at church and in the world (St James CoE School, 2003/2004)

Our mission statement is "Bringing Christ to all and all to Christ." We therefore want every person who enters this school to meet the Christ, who demands the highest academic standards and, when appropriate, demonstrate compassion and sensitivity (St Gabriel RC School, 2003/2004).

As indicated above, this study could not corroborate the sample schools' assertions in these extracts because of the adopted research method (Section 5:8). However, they confirm Dearing's assessment that church schools enabled pupils to be rooted in a Christian community with all its implications, as is revealed in the quotation below:

[*Church schools*] provide a foundation of experience of the Christian life and a body of knowledge of the Christian faith that can sustain their pupils throughout their lives. This range of experience includes an explicit commitment to honesty and openness; a celebration of the identity and nature of culturally and ethnically diverse groups; a readiness to seek and offer forgiveness; all founded in a sense of the presence of God and of the numinous. It includes knowledge of how to pray and of the liturgy, especially the Eucharist/Holy Communion; and an awareness of the challenge of the spiritual life within everyday experience (Dearing, 2001, para. 4.8).

Critics of church schools could use the implications revealed in this extract as grounds for undermining church schools' capacity to provide liberal education.

However, the implications of the extract rather confirmed that critics such as White (1995) were mainly concerned to eliminate RE and religion as whole from education irrespective of their capacity to provide liberal education (Section 3:3). Moreover, the evidence below will show RE as an academic subject engaged in critical reflection as all other subjects in the school curriculum:

The [RE] department seeks to develop in pupils the following: the ability to think for themselves about the deep questions of life; the ability to express their ideas and share their experiences; the ability to listen to and appreciate<sup>47</sup> the views of others; the ability to see, understand and criticise<sup>48</sup> the values of the society in which we live; knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures and the teachings of the Church; concern for others and for the world in which we live; and the ability to value R.E. in school (The Holy Cross RC School, 2003/2004).

Religious Education is the comprehensive and systematic study of the mystery of God, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, the teachings of his Church, the central beliefs that Roman Catholics hold, the basis for them and the relationship between faith and life; ... encourages investigation and reflection by the pupils; develops the appropriate skills and attitudes and promotes free, informed and full response to God's call in everyday life religions (St Wilfrid CoE School, 2003/2004).

The contents of these extracts should confirm the academic and critical nature of RE in church schools. They should also refute the charge of being a vehicle of passing on uncritical beliefs (Section 3:3). Once again, this study has not the evidence to corroborate the church schools' claims in reality for the simple reason that the adopted research method could not permit such an observation. A future study with a different research method could, through an observation, investigate the critical role

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<sup>47</sup> This word is ambiguous and needs further explanation in order to avoid the question of whether RE develops in pupils a tendency to appreciate views that may contradict the social and religious norms of society.

<sup>48</sup> The use of this phrase: 'criticise the values of the society' assumes that all underlying values of society are questionable. This inadvertent assumption necessitates the need for church schools to be very careful in the choice of language used in their prospectuses.

of RE in the development of pupils' spirituality in church schools. However, Christian nurturing was identified, from the examination of the prospectuses, as one of the aims of RE in church schools. According to O'Keeffe (1986), this was a very significant revelation for Christian education because: 'nurture takes the form of the imparting of knowledge of the Bible, instruction in, and the practice of, the Christian faith.' Thus nurturing pupils in the Christian faith would, and should, involve instructing them to live a life reflective of the Bible which means a relationship with God through Christ, as the following extracts show:

Religious Education...gives purpose and meaning to the existence of the school... Pupils are helped to understand what being a Christian means in their everyday lives, at both personal and community levels. In every way, we try to create an environment in which pupils may develop a real relationship with Christ (St Jude RC School, 2003/2004).

At the heart of Roman Catholic education is the Christian vision of the human person. This vision is expressed and explored in religious education. Therefore, religious education is never simply one subject among many, but the foundation of the entire educational process (St Anselm CoE School, 2003/2004).

These extracts, as they stand, confirm the multifaceted role of RE in church schools in terms of nurturing pupils in the Christian faith and providing a means for pupils without faith to experience the Christian faith in action. However, the exact or actual process of using RE to nurture pupils in church schools could not be confirmed in this study. This was due to the well-documented weakness of the selected research method for this study (Section 5:8). However, the revealed role of RE raised several significant questions for this study. For example: To what extent should the nurturing aspect of RE render Christian education incompatible with liberal education or

critical openness? Could church schools use RE as a vehicle of indoctrinating their pupils? The question of the compatibility of Christian education with liberal education has been examined in detail in Section 3:3, concluding that the underlying Christian theology of church schools is self-critical and dynamic. The dynamic nature of Christian theology should enable church schools to construct a workable synthesis of the constraints of modern society, such as pluralism, secularism and market economy, and Christian education. Thus Christian nurture should involve providing pupils with theoretical and practical reasons for either accepting or rejecting the Christian faith without coercion. Such a capacity of the church schools to find a workable synthesis of modern constraints and Christian education could, and should refute the charge that Christian education undermines individual autonomy. However, whether the capacity existed in reality should be the role for a future study because this study could neither confirm nor deny it. Regarding whether church schools indoctrinated their pupils, Section 3:4 concluded that Christian faith is incompatible with indoctrination. However, as Mitchell (1970) argued, education should start from somewhere without necessarily providing reasons for that starting point because neither the teacher nor the learner might understand the reason for the selected starting point. Based on this reason, Mitchell argued that a degree of indoctrination was necessary for every form of teaching and learning or education, including mathematics and science. Moreover, Christian faith and spirituality are neither acceptable to, nor compatible with, a deliberate attempt to manipulate an educational environment to induce in pupils beliefs favourable to the Christian faith. While personal response and commitment to the Christian faith should be encouraged and

nurtured, care should be taken to exclude or avoid imposition, compulsion or manipulation because of the following assumptions made about pupils in church schools:

- Most pupils in church schools are in search of a faith for their present and future lives.
- Most pupils in church schools, by implication, are in search of a Christian faith taught in accordance with the schools' Christian teachings.
- Pupils in church schools, like all human beings, are spiritual beings who have an inborn desire to know more about God and to be more spiritual.

These assumptions about pupils in church schools should confirm the desirability for an environment that could allow the critical reflection of the fundamental concepts of the Christian faith to take place. Such an environment would require, or should involve, a time for individuals and the whole school community to participate in or witness the Christian faith in action which should stimulate personal reflection in a form of Christian worship. The next section therefore explores the role of Christian worship in the development of pupils' spirituality.

### **7.3 Christian worship as nurturing Christian spirituality**

The *Education Acts* of 1944, 1988, and 1996 provided the legal basis for Christian worship to take place in the church schools. For example, *the Department for Education (DFE) Circular 1/94* described the aim of collective worship in the maintained schools in England in the following terms:

Collective worship in schools...aim to provide the opportunity for pupils to worship God, to consider spiritual and moral issues and to explore their own beliefs; to encourage participation and response whether through active involvement in the presentation of worship or through listening to and joining in the worship offered; ... (DFE 1994, p. 20).

The aspiration of acts of worship in education was to connect pupils to God. The fact that the *DFE Circular* recognised the inherent aspiration of an act of worship in schools should challenge the claim that religious, for example Christian, worship undermined the autonomy of the individual and of education. This seriously discredits one of the main objections to church schools' capacity to provide liberal education. However, the *DFE Circular* failed to relate an act of worship to a particular religion or religious denomination making an act of worship consistent with the pluralists' view that religions were different perspectives of the same God.<sup>49</sup> Thus a particular religion could not have a monopoly of the nature of worship in schools. Another *DFE Circular* (1994a, p. 21) also described an act of worship thus:

[Worship]...should...have its natural and ordinary meaning. That is, it must...reflect something special or separate from ordinary school activities and should be concerned with reverence or veneration paid to a divine being or power.

This regards acts of worship in schools as an addition to normal school activities rather than to substitute other curriculum subjects such as RE. Besides, collective worship should be for all registered members in a school irrespective of their religious persuasions. The legality of collective worship should confirm that critics of church schools were only determined to eliminate Christianity or religion from the maintained system if not the whole of education. The law also required all maintained

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<sup>49</sup> See Appendix C

schools to provide a period of reflection on a divine being or power or an object which could, presumably, include human beings. Thus individual schools were at liberty to reflect on a particular being or power justifying church schools' direction of an act of worship to the divine being of the denomination to which they were attached. Examination of the sample schools' prospectuses revealed that they followed a particular pattern of setting time aside for reflection as required by law. For example, all eighty church schools indicated that they had a regular weekly act of collective worship in the form of a year-group assembly, and a daily shorter version during registration period which included prayers and a quiet time for reflection. Eighty-seven per cent of the schools organised an end-of-term celebration for Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. Sixty seven per cent of the schools marked the beginning and the end of the academic year with a 'Welcome Service' and a 'Thanksgiving Service' respectively. Non-church or LEA schools also followed a similar pattern of setting time aside for an individual reflection. However, examination of the samples schools collective worship policies revealed one of the fundamental differences between the church and LEA schools. LEA schools provided for pupils to reflect on life experiences and some outstanding individuals who had made a significant difference in the past or present. For example, the majority of the LEA sample schools (75%) mentioned individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, Mother Theresa, and Gandhi and so on as the 'object' for pupils' reflection. In contrast, an act of worship in church schools provided an opportunity for pupils to reflect on God. For example, 78% of the church schools organised special 'Reflection Days' during which, pupils could be invited to explore the



Christian faith through prayer, discussion, drama, music, art and video. Ninety-three per cent of the schools celebrated mass or Eucharist at least three times in the school year, especially on major dates of the denominational calendar, such as ‘Holy Days of Obligation’. Some Roman Catholic schools (19%) claimed to have a voluntary weekly mass at the beginning of the school week. Another 7% of the schools also claimed to have a monthly mass/communion at various days in the month. The Roman Catholic schools with a regular weekly or monthly mass (26%) also celebrated the ‘Sacrament of Reconciliation’<sup>50</sup> with pupils. While the revealed religious activities in the prospectuses distinguished the church schools from those of LEA, there was no way of confirming whether those activities actually did occur in reality. The research method could not allow such an observation to take place for the reason given in Section 5:8. However, O’Keeffe (1986) analysed replies received from thirty-eight headteachers of CoE schools in her study regarding the nature and content of acts of worship in their schools. She concluded that acts of worship in church schools were essentially Christian and devotional (p. 71). O’Keeffe’s conclusion resonated with Richardson’s view that worship is ‘the expression in corporate gatherings of adoration, praise and thanksgiving to God through Christ’ (1983, p. 605). Thus an act of worship should be an opportunity for both staff and pupils in church schools to offer together their gratitude and appreciation to God. The research method chosen for this study could not allow an opportunity for this researcher to observe and experience acts of worship in the samples schools; however, reports of observations and experiences obtained through Section 23

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<sup>50</sup> This is another name for the Sacrament of Penance in the Roman Catholic Church

inspection reports were available and reflected the descriptions in the church schools' prospectuses, as is shown in the extract below:

Provision for worship is good. Pupils in each year have a weekly assembly and on other days there is Morning Prayer in tutor groups. Prayer occurs frequently in religious education lessons. The chapel is open daily for reflection and as a place of quiet for staff and pupils. There is a rota of class Masses which pupils attend with their tutors. Masses are held on holy days and on other special occasions. The local parish church provides an ideal setting for some of these. There are special liturgies in Lent and Advent which often involve drama. Opportunities for pupils to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation occur at these times also ... (St Benedict RC School, Section 23 Report, 2004).

The significant roles of RE and collective worship in the church schools as regards individual pupils' spirituality are quite clear in the extract above. However, there was the question of the extent to which pupils could have been coerced to participate in the described religious activities in church schools. Again this question was difficult for this study to answer due to its chosen research method. However, it was reasonable to assume that pupils in church schools were admitted with the understanding of participating in religious activities organised by, and within, the schools. This understanding could have made it hard for individual pupils to withdraw from religious activities such as RE lessons and collective worship in church schools. Nevertheless, it could not have amounted to coercion since the ERA required registered pupils in maintained schools in England and Wales to receive RE and collective worship. Similarly, it could neither have been the church using its schools to induce Christian response from non-church affiliated applicants for the reason that, for example, all the eighty sample church schools for this study stated their expectation of non-church affiliated applicants to participate in RE lessons and

collective worship. The question, nonetheless, was the compatibility of the spiritual development in church schools and the National Curriculum (NC) through which Christian education should be delivered. This question of compatibility between Christian education and the NC is the subject matter for the next section.

#### **7.4 The National Curriculum (NC) and Christian spirituality**

Up until the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) individual maintained schools in England and Wales could determine the structure and the content of their curriculum except RE which, the 1944 Education Act had made compulsory. The ERA introduced the NC, which together with RE, constituted the basic curriculum. The NC required the maintained schools to deliver the basic curriculum for all pupils to the age of sixteen. Thus NC defined the minimum educational entitlements for pupils of compulsory school age (5-16 year olds). The legal requirement of the NC to provide the minimum educational entitlement for pupils suggested flexibility within the law for individual schools to create curriculum that could reflect their particular needs and circumstances. Dearing therefore suggested that the church schools and Christian teachers could use the flexibility within the NC to develop Christian curriculum which could prepare pupils for the stewardship of the created order. However, the extent to which teachers in church schools used the flexibility allowed in the NC could not be determined by this study. As has been stated at various stages of this study, the chosen research method could not allow the observation that could have provided some answers to the question. However, the NC contained nationally prescribed core subjects: English, Mathematics, Science, and 'Foundation' or optional

subjects.<sup>51</sup> The selection of ‘core’ and ‘foundation’ subjects presupposed the national priorities for teaching and learning in the maintained schools. Such priorities could also presuppose the national conception of the good life for which the core subjects were particularly significant. Bailey (1984) argued that the NC provided a particular body of knowledge which was prerequisite for achieving the national good life. However, he failed to specify the nature of this knowledge which, theoretically, could be problematic for church schools. For example, could the good life presupposed by the NC be compatible with the church schools’ educational mission or the Christian conception of the good life? If the NC’s presupposed knowledge or conception of the good life was incompatible with the Christian conception of the good life, it would, and should, make the use of the NC to define the minimum educational entitlements for pupils in church schools unsustainable. Moreover, the presupposed knowledge of the NC could distinguish between education offered through NC subjects and Christian education which should develop individual spirituality. Such a distinction could corroborate the claim of writers such as Hirst (1981), Bailey (1984), Swann (1985), and White (1995) that Christian education was incompatible with liberal education. This should raise the question of whether church schools’ subscription to the NC compromised their educational mission. Ramsey (1970), writing long before the introduction of the NC, argued for the compatibility between Christian education and the teaching of, and learning from, all subjects in a school curriculum. He asserted that an acquisition of knowledge, its analysis, its application through

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<sup>51</sup> See Appendix F for a full lists of both the core and optional subjects of the National Curriculum (NC)

stewardship, and teaching others to acquire such knowledge could be a form of service to God, as is expressed below:

Worshippers of the God of all truth serve him when they search for information, when they are humble before facts and ambitious for their humane use, when they excite and equip others for the same quest (p. 205).

Thus Christian education is ‘holistic’ (McLaughlin, 1996) in terms of preparing human beings to be more spiritual. This spirituality of individuals, from the Christian perspective, is to represent God in, and look after, the created order, as the following extracts show:

Our aim is to develop in pupils inquiring minds through the study of a broad range of subjects and through the encouragement of self-discipline and hard work in the pursuit of excellence; to encourage young people to fully develop themselves intellectually, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually through academic study and through participation in extra-curricular activities in a Christian context (St Stephen RC School, 2003/4).

Within a Christian and equal opportunities context, our purpose is to challenge all students to the highest standards of achievement of which they are capable (St Barnabas CoE School, 2003/4).

These extracts demonstrate the extent to which critics of church schools could underestimate the schools’ capacity to provide liberal education and, at the same time, to promote faith in Christ. Deakin (1989a) and McLaughlin (2000) argued that the church schools’ have the capacity to provide both Christian and liberal education (Section 3.3). This study has also argued that Christian education is concerned with the processes and purposes of teaching and learning from particular subjects, such as mathematics and sciences, in the NC rather than with attempting to teach such

subjects with Christian bias. It was not surprising, therefore, that examination of the prospectuses showed church schools either intentionally or inadvertently as following the pattern set out by the NC. For example, the sample schools followed the subject groupings in the NC, such as Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9) and Key Stage 4 (Years 10 and 11). The NC subjects for the two Key Stages showed a natural progression from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4. The progression was such that Key Stage 3 prepared pupils for public examinations taken at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11). Examination of church schools' prospectuses revealed similarities between the church and LEA schools' curricula. For example, one church school (LEA 12) described its curriculum thus:

*[Curriculum contains]...educational experiences...offered to students... includes all the core National Curriculum subjects i.e. English, Maths and Science, and for us R.E. It also includes other aspects of school life such as work experience, educational visits, large-scale projects, Days of Reconciliation and opportunities to develop leadership and take responsibility in the school. Thus the way we care for all our students is seen as a central part of our curriculum (St Andrew RC School, 2004/3).*

This understanding incorporates every aspect of life in a church school in its curriculum confirming the wholeness of a church-school education. Thus the nature of the church schools' curriculum should refute Arthur's (1995) argument that the 'dualistic' model of the church schools undermined their distinctiveness. As argued already, Christian education should not draw a distinction between secular and religious aspects of education because every aspect of the curriculum would, and should, prepare pupils to be stewards of the created order. Thus Christian education should enable pupils to be autonomous in their acceptance or rejection of Christian

spirituality. This capacity should confirm the NC as posing no threat to church schools' educational mission. Moreover, subjects within the NC should be offered or taught in a deliberately Christian environment conducive to the Christian spiritual nurture of pupils. A twofold implication for church schools' use of the NC could be as follows:

- If the content and outcome of the NC were compatible with liberal education, then so too should the education offered in church schools (cf. Table 7:1).
- If the outcomes of public examinations at the end of Key Stage 4 revealed the standard of a school's education, church schools could be justified in their claim of offering a high standard of education to their pupils, for the reasons shown in Table 6:4.

**Table 7:1**

**Ofsted statistics of grade A\*-C passes at GCSE in the sample schools**

School Type	Above average %	Below average %	Total %
CoE	69	31	100
Roman Catholic	70	30	100
LEA	35	65	100

(Source: DfES, 2003)

**School type:** whether CoE or Roman Catholic or LEA schools. **Above average:** % of schools of each type achieving more than the national average of five or more grade A\*-C passes at GCSE. **Below average:** % of schools of each type achieving less than the national average of five or more grade A\*-C passes at GCSE

Table 7:1 reveals that the CoE (69%) and RC (70%) schools had pupils gaining more than the national average percentage of five or more grade A\*-C passes at GCSE. It also reveals that only 35% of LEA schools had pupils achieving more than the national average percentage of five or more grade A\*-C passes at GCSE. The implication should be that church schools could provide a standard of education either

higher than or at least comparable to that provided by LEA schools and that the standard of education in church schools satisfied the criteria of liberal education. However, as argued earlier, critics sought to undermine church schools with the claim that they either had reduced their religious emphasis or had had a privileged intake of bright pupils for their academic achievements. This argument assumed the significance of religious activities or faith to church schools' academic achievements. This argument has also been examined above (see Table 6:2) and has been found wanting. Dearing also rejected both of these arguments and insisted that the NC enabled church schools to prepare pupils to be part of modern English society and the wider world in a Christian context (p. 21). Dearing's insistence resonated with Swann who argued that the appropriate education for modern English society was to offer: 'all pupils a good, relevant and up to date education of life in Britain and the world as it is today' (p. 315). The life in Britain, according to Swann, was pluralist and multicultural confirming education as enabling pupils to 'participate fully in shaping society as a whole within a framework of commonly accepted values, practices and procedures ...' (Swann, 1985). The life in Britain envisaged by Swann should enable religious institutions such as schools to function without being branded a threat to social cohesion. Besides, the vision of Christian education could and should exceed that contemplated by Swann. For example, Christian education should enable pupils to acknowledge God as the creator of the created order and human beings as creatures and representatives of God in a Christian community. Christian education should also work through the NC subjects, religious education (RE) (basic curriculum) and collective worship to prepare pupils for their Christian spirituality. Church schools, in



this sense, could not compromise their educational mission by following the subjects and patterns of the NC. On the contrary, church schools could, and should, use the flexibility within the NC to provide Christian examples in teaching and learning to reflect the highest aspirations of humanity, helping to reveal some of the moral and ethical issues facing contemporary society (Dearing, 2001). Once again, the present researcher could not observe the extent to which teachers in church schools used the existing flexibility to provide Christian examples because of the research method chosen for this study (Section 5:8). Nevertheless, the question of the role of human intelligence with respect to nurturing individual Christian spirituality emerged. This question is the subject matter of the next section to which the discussion now turns.

### **7.5 Intelligence and Christian spirituality**

The *Schools Standards and Framework Act* (1998) made no mention of intelligence but referred to ‘ability’ of individual pupils in the educative process. Section 5 (b) of the 1998 Act defined ability as the demonstration of competence either in all subjects or in particular subjects raising the question of its relationship with ‘aptitude.’ A pupil with aptitude demonstrates a natural capacity to succeed in a particular subject area. Thus two different sets of criteria would be required to assess pupils with either ability or aptitude. However, examination of the church schools’ prospectuses revealed the practice of grouping pupils based either on ‘ability’ or ‘aptitude’. None of the sample church schools provided evidence for the criteria used to assess the level of individual pupils’ intelligence in their prospectuses. This meant the need for the examination of the literature on intelligence to find guidance in this matter. Until

recently, intelligence was thought to be a single entity measured quantitatively by IQ tests or based on teachers' assessment reports (Hallam & Toutounji, 1996). However, new information on the function of the human brain, the impact of the emotions on intellectual acuity, genetics, and the environmental impact on cognitive abilities have all challenged the traditional understanding and measurement of intelligence (ibid). Consequently, attempts to distinguish the many components of intelligence have identified several distinctive forms of intelligence and led to the notion of multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983). Gardner argued that there were more forms of intelligence than was revealed by the use of test scores, such as those examined at the eleven-plus stage. In particular those subjects for which intelligence was a consequence of aptitude, or intelligence which was displayed in extra-curricular subjects which lay outside the 'timetabled' subjects. Gardner (1983) identified at least seven distinct forms of intelligence in human beings. He noted that only the linguistic and logical-mathematical form fell within the normal definition of intelligence. The other five, spatial (chess, painting etc.), musical (playing or appreciation), bodily kinaesthetic (sports and gymnastics), interpersonal (social skills) and intrapersonal (self-awareness), and the more recently added ones, naturalist intelligence (knowledge of the living world), spiritual intelligence (cosmic issues), and existential intelligence (ultimate issues), were referred to as talents. He pointed out that schools and cultures tended to focus mostly on linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence, leaving out the others. Thus placing emphasis upon linguistic and logical-mathematical intelligence could mean that children with other forms of intelligence received little or no encouragement in school because they could be

assessed with the wrong criteria. A church school engaged in Christian education could therefore undermine the innate intelligence of certain pupils if it embarked on assessment criteria based on, for example, eleven-plus test scores. More explicitly, church schools may inadvertently fail to develop pupils' spiritual and existential intelligence if they exclusively used the linguistic and logical-mathematical procedures for intelligence assessment.

In order for schools to assess all forms of intelligence, Gardner proposed that teachers could, and should, be trained to present lessons in a variety of ways, such as through music, art, drama, role-play, multimedia, field trips, and reflection. Sternberg (1985) also argued that environmental factors such as culture and religion should be included in the assessment of intelligence. For example, from the Christian perspective, each person has a natural aptitude which could, depending on religious or social culture, be developed to an exceptional level. Thus religious or social environments could, and should, play a significant role in developing human intelligence. Sternberg cited as an example, a study in which Jewish children systematically selected answers on the right-hand side of a page, and concluded that this could have been due to the Hebrew culture or pattern of reading from right to left. This might suggest that church schools' use of church-affiliation criterion could be a means of drawing pupils from homes sympathetic to the Christian faith and thereby creating an environment for Christian education shared by both school and home. The compatibility of home and church schools' cultures could enable church schools to develop pupils' spiritual and existential intelligence. Theoretically, pupils in church schools could be taught in a

familiar (Christian) environment conducive to nurturing pupils' spirituality and equipping them for the stewardship of the created order. Again, the selected research method for this study meant that this researcher could not find out how church schools might have incorporated non-Christian environment in the schools for the benefit of non-church affiliated pupils. Thus the relationship between intelligence and environment stands in contrast to the assessment of pupils' ability (intelligence) based on tests which failed to incorporate individual pupils' environments such as faith, non-faith and non-English language spoken at home. Thus ability-grouping without reference to pupils' respective environments such as faith, fails to do justice either to human beings, as understood in relation to God, or their interests and well-being. A church school would therefore fail to nurture pupils' spiritual, physical, mental, cultural and academic development if resorted to placing pupils in ability groupings based on tests in only two or three subjects. Besides, there was consensus in the literature regarding the adverse effects on pupils should their individual environments be ignored. For example, Barker-Lunn (1970) argued that schools that streamed or grouped pupils according to their abilities were naturally interested in bright children. Keddie (1971) also pointed out that 'by inference teachers feel that the 'A' stream [top set] pupils are more like themselves, at least in ways that count in school' (p. 134). Boaler (1997b), confirming the arguments of Barker-Lunn and Keddie, noted that 'top set' teachers changed their normal practices in relation to pupils in the set. 'Lower set' teachers, on the contrary, had fixed ideas about the low level of work deemed appropriate for pupils in such groups which could hamper their progress and self-esteem. Thus ability-grouping could work favourably for pupils in top-set of

ability grouping or deemed high-achievers. The advocates of ability-grouping argued that it enhanced pupils' academic achievement for the following reasons: Teachers could focus on like-ability pupils and to adjust the pace of teaching. For example, pupils in top-set could have opportunities for independent research and learning. The pace of teaching in the bottom set, on the other hand, could be slow and repetitive to enable reinforcement in their learning. Thus grouping pupils for teaching and learning is not controversial except that the available evidence in the literature provided little or no support for its benefits. Slavin (1986), in his comprehensive review of research on different types of ability grouping, argued that only selected forms of grouping enhanced pupils' academic achievements. He contended that the grouping of pupils based on ability (competence in all subjects) had little or no effect on their academic achievements. However, he argued that, grouping based on aptitude which is one or two subjects could enhance or improve pupils learning in those particular subjects. Slavin, nevertheless, found in his review that a mixed-ability or heterogeneous grouping enhanced pupils' academic achievement. Wheelock (1992) argued forcefully that the subjective nature of the criteria for the assessment of pupils' ability made the process unfair and harmful to pupils' self-esteem and academic achievements. This raised the question of whether church schools' engagement in such a curriculum organisation could be compatible with Christian education which accepts all human beings as made in the image of God and hence equal before God. Examination of the data gathered for this study revealed that seventy-five per cent of the church schools claimed to have used a form of ability grouping as an effective way for teaching and learning. However, the data provided little evidence for the

criteria used to determine the supposed ability. The selected research method for this study once again meant that this researcher could not observe lessons in the schools either to corroborate or deny church schools' engagement in such a practice and how it might have contributed to pupils' learning. However, Colson pointed out in his study that experienced and strong teachers were allocated to both strong and weak groups, as the following extract illustrates:

We make sure that students from the most able to the least able get a share in the best teaching. Now, I think those are ways which individually don't make us distinct from other schools but, taken together as a package, the fact that we are aware of these does make us distinct (Colson, 2004, p. 77).

An Ofsted inspection report on one of the schools in LEA 5 (Appendix E) also revealed the extent to which this particular school catered for different groupings, as is expressed in the quotation below:

The school monitors the achievement and progress of these different groups...and the results of examinations and other data are analysed on the basis of ethnicity. Any group found to be achieving less strongly than others is targeted for additional support as well as analyses being made as to how the situation might have arisen...The same can be said for the pupils who have special educational needs (St John CoE School, Ofsted Report, 2004).

Thus some church schools recognised the need for grouping pupils to cater for their educational needs. However, the question of the criteria or methods used for grouping pupils still remained. Writers such as Gardner (1983), Sternberg (1985) and Wheelock (1992) contended that criteria without reference to pupils' individual environments could amount to a narrowed view of human intelligence or fraud individuals' academic abilities. Thus there was a consensus in the literature that

schools engaging in ability-grouping might have used questionable criteria or methods to determine individual pupils' academic abilities or levels of intelligence which could possibly damage their self-esteem. Using such apparent questionable criteria for levels of intelligence, according to both Oakes *et al* (1990) and Wheelock (1992) could deliberately or otherwise disadvantage pupils from minority and low-income backgrounds, as is revealed in the quotation below:

During the elementary grades, the science and mathematics experiences of children from low-incomes families, African-American and Hispanic children, children who attend school in central cities, and children who have been clustered in 'low-ability classes' differ in small but important ways from those of their more advantage and white peers. By the time the students reach secondary school, their science and mathematics experiences are strikingly different.

It could also inadvertently disadvantage pupils deemed unprofitable in a market economy educational environment which, should raise the question of its compatibility with Christian educational mission (Section 3:8). Attempting to answer this question required further exploration of the law regarding provision of education for pupils with Special Education Needs (SEN) in maintained schools. *The 1974 Committee of Inquiry* which formed the background of *The Warnock Report* (1978) found that approximately 20% of school pupils in England and Wales had a form of physical, sensory, or mental handicap. The Committee also noted that only 2% of pupils satisfied the legal or statutory definition of 'handicap' leaving 18% outside the legal definition. Thus 18% of school pupils had no special support to teaching and learning at school. The *Warnock Report* (1978) pleaded for schools to provide an appropriate environment for handicapped pupils to be educated. *The 1996 Education*

*Act* (section 316) and the subsequent *2001 Special Education Needs and Disability Act* (1) required maintained schools to provide education for all pupils deemed to have SEN. Thus handicap or SEN could, and should, not bar pupils from the benefits of the mainstream education which resonated with the Christian perception of education. Christian education, described in Section 6:9 has a mission of preparing all human beings, irrespective of their levels of ability, to recognise their nature as made in the image of God and their responsibility as stewards of the created order. Thus it is not only illegal, but a contradiction in terms for Christian education (church schools) to discriminate against pupils based on their physical, mental or emotional handicap because Christian education makes the following assumptions:

- Education is a God-given institution for humanity for the furtherance and maintenance of His creation. Thus ability or disability should not prevent pupils from its participation.
- Church schools could, and should, provide a means for the restoration of individual pupils to God, irrespective of ability, and for nurturing the inborn desire in Man to know more about the meaning and purpose of their existence.

These assumptions were confirmed in the church schools' prospectuses as the following extracts show:

We provide a stimulating learning environment where all children can achieve, whatever their ability or aptitude. All students are valued as individuals and all flourish in a community, which lives by the Christian values of love, compassion and respect for each other (St Augustine CoE School, 2003/4).



To develop a culture of high achievement to enable pupils of all abilities to give of their best in pursuit of the highest standards of which they are capable; To develop the important personal qualities of dignity, self-respect and self confidence so that relationships between staff and pupils can flourish in an atmosphere of openness and trust (St Colette RC School, 2003/4).

These extracts also suggest that Christian education would thrive on an environment that recognised the nature of individual human beings as made in the image of God (cf. Newbigin, 1989). Such an environment would, and should enable Christian education to cater for the development of all pupils. Thus pastoral care should be at the heart of Christian education which seeks to prepare pupils to discover the meaning and purpose of their existence in the created order. With this background, the next section explores the role of pastoral care in Christian education.

#### **7:6 Christian education and pastoral care (PC)**

The issues of intelligence, ability and disability in relation to Christian education raised a number of questions regarding how individual pupils with varying intelligence or ability should be catered for in church schools. These questions could only be theoretically answered by this study due to the fact of its chosen research method (see Section 5:8). However, a detailed examination of the sample church schools' prospectuses revealed pastoral care (PC) as creating a desirable environment for Christian education to take place, as the following extracts show:

The school prides itself on the care of its pupils, believing that academic success and fulfilment in adult life are achieved through a strong support for the individual pupil (St Anselm CoE School, 2003/4).

The strength of pastoral care is an important factor in our school's success. We know and value each of our students and understand their needs as individuals from the very beginning (St Joseph's RC School, 2003/4).

Theoretically, these extracts should confirm the finding of Reed *et al* (2002) that pastoral care was one of the key underlying features that enabled the Christian headteachers in their study to turn failing schools around. The selected research method meant that physical interactions between this researcher and the schools could not take place either to corroborate or deny the role ascribed to PC in church schools. Nevertheless, evidence of such interactions was available in Section 23 Report of St Benedict RC School in LEA 3 (Appendix G), as is shown in the extract below:

There is a strong pastoral system, which was evidenced to be constantly in use to the benefit of all pupils. Supportive documentation is in place, for example, an equal opportunity policy, an anti-bullying policy and a comprehensive and positive behaviour policy which is also part of the current school Development Plan...Discipline was observed to be well maintained throughout the school day in corridors and moving between the different buildings. Behaviour in lessons was good. Pupils' attitudes in lessons were good. Behaviour in times of worship was good, and pupils were observed to be taking part. There is a caring atmosphere in the school. Pupils were polite and well mannered as a natural expression and not grudgingly. Older pupils in particular, with growing confidence, were generally smiling and courteous. Respect for ourselves and each other is a common theme. Opportunities for counselling with the Chaplain re-iterate the prime concern for the wellbeing of the individual pupil in a Christ centred community. Relationships in the form setting as observed are additional witness to this, as are the relationships observed in lessons within the RE department. The school is an orderly, organised and caring Christian community (Section 23, 2003/4).

This extract reveals certain characteristics of church schools as Christian communities which PC plays a major role. For example, PC system in this particular school informs its various policies such as behaviour and anti-bullying to enable all pupils to

enjoy equal opportunities. A detailed examination of the PC policies in the sample church schools' prospectuses suggested the ministry of Christ as their model.<sup>52</sup> Thus PC in church schools should involve building personal relationships and promoting individual pupils' social, academic and spiritual well-being in the school community. The sample schools' prospectuses gave an impression that their PC systems were organised to achieve such a desired purpose, as the following extracts show:

Students are organised into five form tutor groups on entry to the school. The Form Tutor is a teacher who meets the tutor group on a daily basis for registration, tutorial, assembly and Act of Worship. The Tutor is expected to know tutees as individual students and will usually be the first point of contact for parents/carers wishing to communicate with the school (Christ Church CoE School, 2003/4).

Each of the five Year Groups is divided into Forms or Tutor Groups of 25-30 pupils under the guidance and care of a Form Tutor. The Form Tutor is responsible for each pupil's welfare on a day to day basis. Tutors will get to know each individual pupil and be well informed about their general progress and welfare (The Holy Family RC School, 2003/4).

The concept and the pattern of care revealed in the above extracts are reflective of the Biblical concept of Christ, *the shepherd*, looking after His people, *the sheep* (John 10:1-18). Thus the Biblical metaphor indicates a special relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. It shows the shepherd as possessing detailed knowledge of each individual sheep, while the sheep in turn is able to identify the voice of the shepherd and follow his instructions.

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<sup>52</sup> The whole ministry of Christ was concerned with teaching and learning in both formal and informal situations. For example, he taught (formally) as a visiting teacher in synagogues (Mark 1:21, 39; Luke 4:16-27); and in an informal way addressed the crowds in the open air. Jesus, in his teaching, emphasised God as the creator, and both human beings and the world as His creation. God did not only create but also sustains, the world; He clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the ravens (Luke 12:22f.). He also taught that the highest good of humanity is not in the created order. In other words, there is no profit for a human being gaining a high position in the created order and losing his soul (Mark 8: 36).

He (*the shepherd*) calls his own sheep by name and leads them out... When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice,...I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me (John 10:3b-4, 14).

This imagery should translate into provision of care in church schools in such a way that a teacher (shepherd) is responsible for a group of pupils (sheep). Relationships built between teachers and pupils should enable development of trust between them. The established trust should lead pupils to share their concern with a teacher who in turn should guide those pupils in such ways as to develop a sense of worth, value and belonging. However, as Carr (1997) observed, the shepherd/sheep imagery as PC model would generally be resisted in the western world, because of the assumption that it might diminish or undermine the autonomy of individuals. Despite this assumption, there is no evidence that PC based on the shepherd/sheep imagery undermines an individual autonomy. Besides, this concept of shepherd/sheep imagery is an important Biblical image used widely outside the church domain without pejorative connotations. Thus the underlying argument for its inappropriateness is unsustainable because individual autonomy is prominent within the Christian faith. Moreover, even LEA schools either deliberately or inadvertently subscribed to the shepherd/sheep imagery in relation to their PC, as is shown in the extract below:

Each form group has a tutor and a Head of Year who will share the role of caring for a pupil's personal development as well as looking at the big picture of academic achievement across all subjects. Tutors see their pupils several times every day (Jubilee High School, 2003/4).

The shepherd/sheep relationships should eventually produce an atmosphere in which pupils should feel safe and confident to work hard (see Sections 4.3). In terms of

church schools, Grace identified the spiritual capital of the headteachers and teachers as their source of empowerment and guide to building meaningful relationships and making Christian judgements in relation to individuals and the wider school community (Section 4:5). Thus the following assumptions could be made as essential factors underpinning their role as pastoral carers in church schools:

- The majority of the teachers are either practising Christians or sympathetic to the Christian faith
- The teachers are encouraged to share their faith with pupils
- The love, compassion, and justice of Christ underpin PC exercised in church schools.

Although there was evidence in the literature examined for this study of a shortage of Christian teachers for all church schools, the underlying values of the schools' nature should enable them to function with teachers sympathetic to the Christian faith. The above assumptions should confirm the aim of pastoral care in church schools as enabling individual pupils to respond to God in love, to acquire self-respect and respect for others, and to take personal responsibility for themselves and responsibility to other pupils. Thus PC in church school should reflect the nature and purpose of Christian education as discussed in Section 6:9. The love of God assumed to be at the heart of PC in church schools should encourage teachers to persevere with challenging pupils. Thus PC should be a service to God and should require careful planning to ensure the well-being of all pupils. Careful planning should call on the entire membership of a church school community to play specific roles making discipline an essential part of a PC system. The next section examines the nature and

role of discipline in creating a Christian environment for PC, academic and spiritual growth.

### **7.7 Christian education and discipline**

Examination of the sample schools' disciplinary policies revealed the schools expectations of their pupils in the form of a 'code of conduct' or a 'behaviour policy.' Common to the expectations were good work, honesty, effort, helpfulness, success and courage. The prospectuses identified teachers as responsible for the behaviour of pupils within sight or sound of them (cf. shepherd/sheep imagery above) based on the schools' expectations. Thus teachers should be responsible for recommending pupils for either a reward or sanction. The schools portrayed the concepts of reward and sanction as a means of cultivating in pupils the habits of recognition and acceptance of responsibility and consequence for their own decisions and actions. They were also presented as a means of creating conditions for effective teaching and learning. Thus disciplinary policies were to provide pupils with an opportunity to develop responsible attitudes and values for learning and in life as a whole. Based on these assumptions, the church schools' governors took the view that effective learning could only take place in an atmosphere where standards of good behaviour were set as prerequisites. Good behaviour was described as the conduct assisting the schools to fulfil their function of developing the maximum potential of all pupils. Thus the schools' governors designed and prescribed a way of life consistent, in their view, the nature and purpose of Christian education. This way of life included: effort, academic achievement, good behaviour, a kind act, punctuality, organisation and so forth.

Adherents to the schools expectations resulted in praise in many different ways which, without any attempt to put this into a value order, included the following: a quiet word, encouraging smile; a written comment on pupils work, or in a more detailed way picking out specific points or ideas that gave pleasure; a visit to a senior member of staff and/or the headteacher for commendation; a public word of praise in front of a group, a class, a Year group or the whole school; a letter to parents and so forth. The sanction aspect of the church schools' disciplinary policies was portrayed as necessary for the following reasons: (i) to make the particular pupil and others aware of both the teachers' and the schools' disapproval of unacceptable behaviour; and, (ii) to protect the authority of teachers, should that be threatened. To this end, sanctions were presented as constructive, flexible and given with sensitivity. The sanction was to be applied discriminatorily or specifically to the culprit and not to a whole group. Examination of the schools' disciplinary policies identified specific behaviour that they disapproved, for example, disobedience, laziness, and dishonesty, failure to do homework, vandalism, bullying, name-calling, racism, and other anti-social practices. One or more of the following: detention, being placed on report, soliciting an apology, repairing the damage, and, in rare cases, temporary or permanent exclusion could be applied to culprits. The extracts below are typical examples from the church schools' disciplinary policies:

We expect high standards of behaviour as effective learning can only take place in a well ordered environment...when students experience difficulties in meeting these expectations, sanctions will be applied and support offered (Bishop Ramsey CoE School, 2003/4).

A high standard of self-discipline is expected of all students, both in and out of school. Good discipline provides a secure basis for the happiness of the whole school and inculcates a good attitude to work (St Gabriel RC School, 2003/4).

Thus church schools' disciplinary policies are designed to promote a calm and purposeful environment based on respect for oneself and others, including staff and school properties, so that Christian teaching, learning and nurturing could take place. However, whether or not the disciplinary policies achieved their desired effect could not be confirmed by this study for the reason of the selected research method described in Section 5:8. The disciplinary policies within the church schools could therefore challenge the pluralists' view of no absolutes. The concepts of reward and sanction introduced pupils to personal and social morality in the form of right and wrong. Thus the schools' disciplinary policies could create a purposeful environment for pupils to explore different conceptions of the good life in relation to the Christian faith. To this end, it should be reasonable to assume that disciplinary regimes in church schools might offer opportunities for pupils to encounter the Christian faith as individuals and as part of the school community. Effectively, reward and sanction regimes in church schools could create a Christian atmosphere for the following: (i) to encourage the formation of personal and social responsibility; and (ii) to inculcate in pupils a sense of conscience and compassion and a commitment of service to other pupils. Thus disciplinary policies in individual church schools should inform their ethos, the type that could not change at will to change the schools' public image. This view of discipline in church schools should be inconsistent with what Felderhof (2002) described as conditioning of pupils to one of the following: (i) to behave in an



acceptable way to a teacher and a school, and (ii) to maintain order in the school. Thus the stated disciplinary policies in church schools' prospectuses should make them inextricably linked with their ethos, nature and role. Given that church schools should be part of the Christian community with specific underlying moral values, according to Felderhof, reward and sanction regimes in these schools could achieve their, as he put it, 'vision, conceptions, and practices'. Thus disciplinary policies in church schools should not be detached from the education offered. However, it was difficult for this study to confirm the relationship between church schools' disciplinary policies and the education they purported to offer.

Another important aspect of the disciplinary policies of church schools was in the area of sexual-intercourse relationships, which has been examined in detail in Section 6.6.3. This examination revealed that heterosexual relationship between a husband and a wife is God's intended and preferred way for human beings to find sexual-intercourse fulfilment. This relationship, according to Christian interpretation of the Genesis narrative, should form the foundation of family life (nurturing children) and society. However, questions about the interpretation of the Genesis narrative and other Biblical passages have been raised by, for example, Stuart and Thatcher (1997) (see Section 6:6:3). There is a view that a proper sexual-intercourse relationship of any nature should not be fulfilled in promiscuous or casual relationships (Farley, 2006). While the marriage between a man and a woman is the traditional Christian understanding in the created order for Man, singleness or celibacy is also perceived as a vocation for certain individuals. The question for church schools disciplinary

policies is the extent to which they should teach pupils regarding the nature and purpose of sexual-intercourse relationships. Examination of the schools' expressed disciplinary policies, failed to advocate the desirability of abstinence from sexual-intercourse unless those involved are ready to make a loving commitment to each other. Farley (2006) has strongly argued that the ethical framework for sexual relationships is not different for heterosexual and homosexual relationships (p. 272). Thus the church schools should have a duty of preparing pupils for the world of a diverse sexual orientations and the individuals' ethical responsibility. Examination of the sample schools' policies on sex education failed to reveal any sexual-intercourse relationships other than the heterosexual marriage of a man and a woman. This made it difficult for this study to assess the schools' understanding and teaching, and their pastoral care for those who might be inclined to same-sex sexual-intercourse relationships. It is important for church schools to be explicit about their attitude towards other forms of sexual-intercourse expressions in order to promote discipline in the schools. The absence of a clear direction on human sexual-intercourse relationships might lead to indiscipline among pupils. Thus indiscipline might lead to bullying, name-calling, anti-gay/lesbian prejudice, and so forth, which might make certain pupils' life at school intolerable. Examination of the disciplinary policies in church schools showed that discipline was one of the main factors for creating a Christian environment for teaching and learning. This should make such an environment the embodiment of the denominational vision of the schools. It is therefore essential for church schools to specify in their prospectuses and disciplinary policies their preferred form of human sexual-intercourse and the care and support

offered to pupils who might not subscribe to such sexual-intercourse relationship to promote social cohesion. However, the church schools, which might take exception to same-sex relationships, could promote their concept of the good life as far as it recognised the right of other forms of sexual-intercourse relationships to exist in society. Of course, the church schools should not have to agree with those who might be inclined towards other forms of sexual relationships. The church schools should rather concentrate on preparing pupils for the Christian life, which should include life inside and outside the school, present (childhood) and future (adult) (Wolterstorff, 2000). St Paul describes the Christian life as living in the ‘image of God’, failure of which means falling short of His standard set for humanity in the person of Jesus. Thus from the Christian perspective, failing to be like Jesus amounts to falling short of God’s glory, which St Paul refers to as sinful (Romans 3:23). God takes this failure seriously (Romans 6:23), and therefore a Christian community, for example a church school, should have a duty of care for the fallen including nurturing them back to being like Christ. This should demonstrate the purpose of discipline in church schools as enabling the fallen to rise to the challenge of meeting God’s standard and encouraging the membership of the community to aspire to be Christ-like.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that church schools have the duty of preparing pupils to recognise the nature and purpose of their existence in the created order. This recognition is in relation to God and involves spiritual education which is a combination of religious education, collective Christian worship and aesthetic

education. The chapter has argued that there is no basis for distinguishing between RE and aesthetic education because the absence of one makes the other incomplete and leaves the innate spiritual need of human beings unfulfilled. It has also argued that there is a relationship between Christian spirituality and intelligence which, although both are innate in human beings, they require Christian education for their further developments. The process for this development includes the acknowledgment of individuals' innate intelligences; however, the criteria used should include individuals' social and spiritual environments. This chapter has also argued for the existence of different forms of intelligences (Gardner, 1983 and Sternberg, 1985) making ability grouping based on test scores on a few subjects inappropriate, unfair and discriminatory for assessing individual intelligence. Thus church schools' engagement in the practice of grouping pupils according to their individual abilities could mean deliberately or inadvertently ignoring pupils' innate gifts and talents or innate intelligence. However, this chapter has accepted that a form of pupil grouping is necessary for individual development to occur. Such a selection should be based on individual aptitude to confirm individual pupils' innate gifts and talents. Thus this selection would incorporate all areas of the schools' curriculum, including extra-curricular activities.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

## 8.1 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find answers from church schools' own published prospectuses to the following three questions:

- How did church schools understand and express their nature and role in the mission of the church?
- Were the identified and expressed nature and mission of church schools compatible with liberal education theory?
- How did the identified and expressed nature and mission of church schools contribute, if at all, to intolerance in English society?

Examination of the prospectuses revealed the schools' self-understanding of their nature as denominational, voluntary-aided comprehensives. However, stating this self-understanding of their nature failed to indicate its implications for teachers, pupils, parents, readers of the prospectuses and for teaching and learning. Lack of clear understanding and expression of the implications of the schools' nature therefore affected any expression of their role in the mission of the church. However, a detailed examination of the prospectuses and other public church and school documents revealed the implications of the schools' expressed nature as set out below:

- for the discovery of individual and corporate identity, the meaning and the purpose of the human life
- for providing an environment conducive to nurturing and developing innate gifts of human persons to reach their maximum potential of staying in a relationship with God through Christ
- for encouraging and enabling togetherness among pupils of different social, cultural and levels of academic backgrounds
- for facilitating the understanding that Christian faith does neither impose on, nor manipulate, individuals to stay in close relationship with God through Christ without an individual's choice either to accept it or reject it

The underlying basis for the implications of the schools' self-declared nature was the Christian belief that Man is made in the image of God to live and represent Him in the created order. To be God's representative is to possess some essential tools and skills which church schools, by nature, should offer to their registered pupils and the wider community. Examination of the prospectuses also revealed that church schools perceived their role in the mission of the church as providing a high standard of education consisting of acquiring skills and tools that would make individual persons and communities good stewards of the created order as God intended. Engaging in the described education would mean offering Christian education whose aim is to cater for social, academic, cultural and spiritual needs of human beings. However, there was a need for the church schools to state this difference clearly in their prospectuses for readers to ascertain their nature and its implications. Thus the church schools' nature was inextricably linked to their perceived roles in the mission of the church. Based on this understanding, this study can confirm the church schools' role in the mission of the church thus:

- to provide answers to questions raised in society which secularism fails to answer
- to engage in both spiritual and social evangelism
- to provide young people with critical assessment tools to enable them to explore a particular vision of God, the created order, and the human history
- to provide young people with an alternative (Christian) world view to secularism

The implication is that church schools either deliberately or inadvertently recognise themselves as a place to offer Christian education which involves a combination of Christian nurturing and general education. Thus Christian education should be the

proclamation of the restoration of Man to God, his environment and a meaningful relationship with other human beings irrespective of their backgrounds. The goal of Christian education therefore should confirm the distinctiveness of church schools as is expressed in their self-understanding. Based on this goal, Christian education offered through church schools should be distinguished from LEA schools for the following reasons:

- church schools can legally formulate their admissions policies based on church affiliation to attract certain pupils
- church schools can appoint teachers who subscribe to, or are at least sympathetic to, the Christian vision of God, Man, and the world
- church schools can teach denominational religious education and conduct collective worship in accordance with their trust deeds.

In the light of some striking similarities between church and LEA schools (Section 6:2), this study rejects critics' claim that church schools contributed to intolerance in society unless, of course, one accepts the extreme view that simply by being different church schools undermined social cohesion. This extreme view is itself an expression of intolerance in that it does not tolerate differences. Using maintained schools' DfEE statistical information from 2003/4, this study can conclude that the proportion of schools classified as 'disadvantaged' in Ofsted inspection reports was broadly similar to that of church schools. Moreover, church schools should be able to draw pupils from across the academic and social spectrum by using their church-affiliation criterion in their admissions policies. LEA schools, on the other hand, restricted their pupil intake by basing it on a catchment-area criterion. Furthermore, the average FSM entitlements were almost identical in both church and LEA schools. However, GCSE examination outcomes in church schools located in disadvantaged areas appeared to



be better than those of LEA schools confirming the assertion that some internal Christian factors within church schools could underscore their academic achievements. RE and collective worship in church schools should be essential means of propagating the Christian faith and enabling young people, whether with or without faith, to experience that faith in action. However, this study could not confirm the extent to which RE and collective worship were actually used in church schools to propagate the Christian faith. The critical investigation of the Christian faith should encourage RE to be put in its proper context in a form of Christian worship enabling all pupils and teachers to participate in it. This approach should develop the inborn desire in humanity to know God, to learn to live in a community, and to become more spiritual. Based on this, this study takes the view that church schools are crucial for the church in contemporary English society for the following reasons:

- to provide a much needed-platform for the church to reach young people and adults they would not otherwise reach, so as to enable them to encounter Christian faith in action
- to undermine the ascendancy of secularism in popular culture and to provide an alternative lifestyle or world view to that of secularism

There was no evidence in the literature and research studies to maintain that church schools were incompatible with liberal education and that they undermined social cohesion. Equally, there was no evidence to sustain the view that church schools based their pupil intake on pupils' (i) social class, and (ii) academic ability. Church schools could neither be a threat to LEA schools nor the communities in which they operated. It is also the conclusion of this study that church schools could not indoctrinate their pupils for the reasons below:

- Christian faith advocates and supports human autonomy through Christ
- the goal of Christian education is incompatible with indoctrination and any form of human manipulation
- the emphasis on teaching, and learning from the National Curriculum subjects and extra-curricular activities ensured pupils' acquisition of cross-curricular skills and tools essential for living in a diverse society

Finally, this study maintains that critics of church schools were determined to eliminate religion from the English education system based on its apparent incompatibility with liberal education. The endeavours of these critics failed for the following reasons:

- the schools, being denominationally-based, offered a choice to applicants to attend either CoE or Roman Catholic schools
- the emphasis of the Christian faith in the church schools' education was consistent with the law in England (1944 Education Act; ERA, 1988)
- The law offered church schools the independence to teach their denominational faith as true
- the Christian faith which underpinned the values of church schools' education encouraged individual autonomy through faith.

## **8.2 Critique of research methodology**

This research does not purport to address all the issues surrounding church schools' understanding of their nature and role within the mission of the Church but is intended to add to, and advance, the understanding of this subject by stimulating debate and discussion. It also raises a large number of questions concerning the nature and mission of church schools as viewed from their own perspectives. The emphasis which has been placed upon the schools' published documents has been at the expense of, for example, interviews with teachers, pupils, governors, parents and non-teaching staff to name but a few, who are the main contributors to the underlying

distinctiveness of church schools. In retrospect, it would have been better, therefore, for some physical interaction to have taken place between the present researcher and some of the identified contributors to the distinctiveness of church schools. Such an interaction could have taken the form of, for example, shadowing teachers, pupils and school governors in order to establish relationships which would have enabled an insight into their perceptions of the schools' understanding of their nature and mission to be gained. Such an interaction could and should have established the following:

1. The identified contributors' own understanding of the schools' nature and mission.
2. The extent to which such an understanding influenced their individual approaches to the church, Christian faith, other religions and interpersonal relationships.
3. The extent to which the role of both RE and collective worship as servicing or maintaining the schools' distinctiveness was perceived.

It would also have been helpful to have found out the extent to which LEA schools' perceptions of church schools' nature and mission affected their own relationship with church schools. Another interesting comparison would have been between pupils in church and LEA schools to have found out how their perceived understanding of their respective schools affected their perceptions of one another. While the shadowing and comparative study of certain groups would have been interesting and would have provided a deeper insight into other groups' perceptions of church schools' understanding of their nature and mission, it would have failed to provide answers to the research questions for this study. Moreover, the scope of this study, the constraints of time and the doctoral dissertation word limit meant that only

selected themes could be explored. The limitations of the research method have already been acknowledged in Section 5:8. However, certain choices had to be made based on the identified gaps in the literature and the nature of research questions. Nonetheless, certain checks and balances were put in place, for example, a pilot study to ensure the independence of the data and their fair interpretation.

### **8.3 Recommendations for future studies**

Based on the nature and role of church schools identified in this study (Chapters Six and Seven), future studies could continue this line of investigation into church schools' understanding of their nature and mission. This could mean an investigation of how the church schools' understanding of their nature and role within the church might have influenced the main contributors to the schools' distinctiveness. Such future research could therefore adopt different strategies, such as a case study, or an ethnography study or a qualitative study. A case study would enable a comparative study between the theory and practice of church schools' understanding of their nature and mission in relation to teachers and pupils. Such research could focus on a selected school which would enable the researcher to shadow teachers and pupils over an extended period of time to discover their individual and corporate perceived understanding of the school's nature and role within the church. Teachers' and pupils' understanding of the nature and role of the church schools in the church could be compared with the schools' understanding of their nature and as revealed by their prospectuses in order to establish the extent to which the schools' published understanding is reflected in the life of teachers and pupils. An ethnographic study

would require a researcher to spend time at a school among teachers and pupils. The researcher would be able to share the life of those perceived as contributing to the values underlying church schools' distinctiveness rather than to observe from a position of detachment (Denscombe, 1998, p. 5). The researcher could teach and be a participant in the decision-making processes of the school for an extended period in order to discover the factors that determine the school's curriculum, disciplinary policy and position on moral issues. The researcher's participation in a school's process would enable an understanding of how pupils and teachers alike attach meanings to happenings in the schools (ibid.). Malinowski (1922, p. 25) put it thus: 'To grasp the natives' point of view, his relation to life, to realize *his* vision and *his* world' (quoted in Denscombe, 1998, p. 69). It would also avoid isolating the school culture from the wider context of the church and society. Investigating issues from the points of view of pupils and teachers would reveal how the understanding of the nature and mission of church schools' influence behaviour inside and outside of school. Finally, another qualitative investigation based on documentary analysis and other methods, such as interviews and questionnaires, would enable more extensive fieldwork to provide empirical evidence for generalisation regarding the relationship between the ways in which schools, teachers and pupils understand church schools' nature and mission and the impact of that understanding on individuals within the schools. It would also allow an opportunity to compare the consistency of theory with practice.

## **Appendices**

## Appendix A

**Schools' Performance Table**

<b>Type of School</b>	<b>No. of Schools</b>	<b>% of pupils achieving 5 or more grades A* - C</b>	<b>% of pupils achieving no GCSE passes</b>
LEA	2434	42.70	5.10
Church of England	139	51.20	4.00
Roman Catholic	338	48.90	3.80

**(Source: John Marks in Faith in Education, 2001)**

This table is taken from 'Standards in Church of England, RC and LEA Schools in England' produced by John Marks in 'Faith in Education. He used this statistical evidence to show that academic performance in church schools is slightly higher than in LEA schools.

## Appendix B

### Schools with selective intake of pupils

This table has been taken from the BBC, 197 top schools based on the number of pupils who achieved five or more grade A\*-C passes in the 2004 GCSE examinations. However, it has been edited to exclude independent fee-paying schools because they were not deemed part of the maintained system of schools. It shows that all the schools were selective in their pupil intake and all achieved 100% grade A\*-C passes in the 2004 GCSE examinations. This confirmed the view of critics of church schools that any schools with a selective or 'better' pupil intake (irrespective of faith background) could achieve better than average results. However, it could also confirm that some internal factors of church schools contributed to their academic performance.

Academy: CY; Voluntary aided: VA; Foundation: FD; SEL: selective; Boys: B; Girls: G; Mixed: M; Languages: L; Maths and computing: M; Science: Sc; Technology: T

School	Type	Specialism	Admissions Policy	Single sex or mixed	% of pupils achieving grades A* - C
Wolverhampton Girls' High School, Wolverhampton	FD	L	SEL	G	100
King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Girls, Birmingham	VA	-	SEL	G	100
Colyton Grammar School, Devon	FD	Sc	SEL	M	100
Reading School, Reading	FD	-	SEL	B	100
King Edward VI Camp Hill School for Boys, Birmingham	VA	T	SEL	B	100
Queen Mary's Grammar School, Walsall	VA	L	SEL	B	100
King Edward VI Grammar School, Chelmsford, Essex	FD	Sc	SEL	B	100



### Appendix B continued

School	Type	Specialism	Admissions Policy	Single sex or mixed	% of pupils achieving grades A* - C
Newport Girls' High School, Telford and Wrekin	CY	-	SEL	G	100
South Wilts Grammar School for Girls, Wiltshire	FD	M	SEL	G	100
Kendrick Girls' Grammar School, Reading	FD	Sc	SEL	G	100
Adams' Grammar School, Telford and Wrekin	VA	T	SEL	B	100
Poole Grammar School, Poole	FD	M	SEL	B	100
Rugby High School, Warwickshire	FD	Sc	SEL	G	100
Pate's Grammar School, Gloucestershire	VA	L	SEL	M	100

(Source: BBC, 177 top schools in England, 2005:  
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4356906.stm>)

## **Appendix C**

### **Pluralists' view on religious and cultural integration**

Hick argues that the apparent differences in religions are complementary rather than contradictory insights into the one divine reality. The question for Hick and other pluralists is how to reconcile the contrasting theologies of different religions. For example, X is an evangelical Christian whose core belief is the exclusiveness of salvation through the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Y is a devout Muslim with the core belief that the prophet Mohammed supersedes Jesus as the final prophet through whom one gains paradise. The point is, the two religions are fundamentally different in relation to their approach to the ultimate reality and some aspects of their theologies are irreconcilable. This challenges the claim that the two religious approaches are different manifestations of the same reality. Netland (1992, p.37) explained as follows:

A careful examination of the basic tenets of the various religious traditions demonstrates that, far from teaching the same thing, the major religions have radically different perspectives on the religious ultimate, the human predicament, and the nature of salvation.

It can be concluded that pluralists' use the argument of two religions as different manifestation of the same reality to attempt to avoid being judgemental concerning whether one religious tradition is superior to another. This should enable them to advocate the pluralist project as a means of achieving social cohesion. McGrath (1996) contended Hick's position was 'a repressive enforcement of a predetermined notion of what something or someone should be, rather than a willingness to accept them for what they actually are' (p. 210). McGrath's position

## **Appendix C continued**

suggests that pluralism fails to contribute to tolerance in society and therefore undermines social cohesion. Given that pluralism has failed to contribute to a means of achieving social cohesion, a conclusion can be drawn that pluralists' intention is to attempt to bring different religions together in a diverse society. However, the irreconcilable differences within different religions suggest that the pluralists' project has failed to achieve its aim of religious and cultural integration. The implication is that there is a need for individual religions to maintain their central tenets and find a way of working together with the view to social and cultural integration. This requires the different religions to engage in dialogue, learn to accept each other, and respect and protect their differences.

## **Appendix D**

### **The Church of England school ethos statement**

Recognizing its historic foundation, the school will preserve and develop its religious character in accordance with the principles of the Church at parish and diocesan level. The school aims to serve its community by providing education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers all its pupils (Dearing, Para 3:24)

## Appendix E\*

### Number of both church and LEA schools selected from each LEA

These tables show number of schools selected from each LEA area covered by this study. The also show how the Church of England, Roman Catholic and LEA schools were paired to enable like-with-like comparison to take place in this study.

#### LEA 1

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
St Peter	St Thomas More	Joseph Clarke

#### LEA 2

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
St Luke	St Bernard	Warwick

#### LEA 3

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
St Barnabas	Convent Girls'	Ashburton
St Andrew	St Joseph	Eastbrook
St Mary	St Stephen	Eastbury

#### LEA 4

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
Bishop Bell	St Margaret	Claverham

#### LEA 5

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
St John	St Benedict	Florence Nightingale
St Anselm	St Lawrence	Pembroke High

#### LEA 6

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
St Edward	Corpus Christi	Bower Park

## Appendix E continued

### LEA 7

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St George	Holy Family	Broomhill
St James	St Gabriel	Beaumont
St Peter and Paul	St Francis	Breckfield

### LEA 8

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
Bishop Ramsey.	St Eugene	Queensmead

### LEA 9

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St Botolph	St Mark	New Heys

### LEA 10

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
Christ Church	St Anselm	Highview
St Wilfrid	St Edmund	Southlands
St George	St Gregory	Meadowfield
The Archbishop	St John	The Westlands

### LEA 11

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St Thomas	The Holy Cross	Southborough

### LEA 12

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
Bishop Wand	St Andrew	Parklands
Archbishop Temple	St Peter	Sutton Park
St Jude	Paul	Ashmore Avenue

## Appendix E continued

### LEA 13

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St Martin	St Vincent	Bourne
Paulinus.	St Lazarus	Uplands
Holy Trinity	St Philip	Warden Park
St Andrew	St Wilfrid	Queen Elizabeth

### LEA 14

<b>CoE Schools</b>	<b>Roman Catholic Schools</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
Christ Church	Bishop Douglass	The Compton
St Mary	Holy Angels	Valley Park

### LEA 15

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St Nicholas	St Basil	Featherstone High

### LEA 16

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St Helen	St Clement	Crown Woods

### LEA 17

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St Matthew	St Bede	Brookfield

### LE A 18

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
All Saints	Sacred Heart	Phoenix

### LEA 19

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St Michael	St Cyril	Netherhall
St Leonard	St Martin	Norwood

### LEA 20

<b>CoE School</b>	<b>Roman Catholic School</b>	<b>LEA School</b>
St Katharine	St Claire	Crofton

## Appendix E continued

### LEA 21

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
St Philip	St Rita	William Morris
St Saviour	St Brendan	Kingsdale

### LEA 22

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
St Saviour and St Olave	St Dominic	Jubilee High
Saint John	St Colette	Oakley

### LEA 23

CoE School	Roman Catholic School	LEA School
St Augustine	St George	Thorpe

**Source:** Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2004 - School and College Achievement and Attainment Tables

. \* The schools names are the 'Research Names' and not the actual names



## Appendix F

### The National Curriculum subjects

The National Curriculum applies to pupils of compulsory school age in community and foundation schools. It is organised on the basis of four key stages as shown in the table below.

#### The National Curriculum: Core subjects

Subjects	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
English	■	■	■	■
Mathematics	■	■	■	■
Science	■	■	■	■

#### The National Curriculum: Non-core foundation subjects

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
Design Technology	■	■	■	
ICT	■	■	■	■
History	■	■	■	
Geography	■	■	■	
Modern foreign languages			■	
Art and design	■	■	■	
Music	■	■	■	
Physical education	■	■	■	■
Citizenship			■	■
RE	■	■	■	■
Careers education			■	■

## Appendix F continued

### The National Curriculum: Non-core foundation subjects

Subject	Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4
Sex education			■	■
Work-related learning				■
Personal, social and health education				

English, mathematics, science, ICT, physical education, citizenship, religious education, sex education, careers education and work-related learning are compulsory at key stage 4 but are not examinable. The arts, design and technology, the humanities and modern foreign languages are entitlement areas. Schools are to make available courses these areas to all pupils who wish to study them. Careers education is now statutory from year 7.

## Appendix G

### The social background of pupils in CoE schools

Area of social deprivation (D); Area of social deprivation but a sizeable number from favourable background D(m); Area of social advantage (A); Free school meal (FSM); Statement of special education needs (SEN); 5 or more A\*-C passes at GCSE; Unauthorised absence (UA)

School	Location	FSM (%)	SEN (%)	A*-C (%)	UA (%)
St Peter	M	12	2.1	52	0.4
St Luke	A	1	1.6	78	0.1
St Barnabas	M	3	0.6	72	0.4
St Andrew	M	4	1.6	77	
St Mary	D	28	1.2	40	2.6
Bishop Bell	D(m)	19	1.8	50	0.6
St John	D(M)	13	1.6	32	1.2
St Anselm	D(M)	2	1.4	89	
St Edward	D(M)	7	1.9	79	0.6
St George	A	1	0.4	84	0.1
St James	D(M)	16	0.7	41	1.5
St Peter and Paul	A	3	0.7	55	
Bp. Ramsey	D(M)	3	1.3	76	0.6
St Botolph	D(M)	10	2.1	73	0.6
Christ Church	D	16	5.9	39	1.2
St Wilfrid	D(M)	10	1.7	47	1.7
St George	D	15	1.6	47	0.1
The Archbishop	D(M)	10	4.7	49	
St Thomas	A	7	2.1	72	0.1
Bishop Wand	D(M)	3	2.1	55	0.2
Archbishop Temple	D(M)	13	3.7	31	1.6
St Jude	D(M)	15	1.9	44	0.2
St Martin	A	3	1.1	78	0.2
Paulinus	A	5	1.6	63	0.5
Holy Trinity	D(M)	4	1.2	73	0.5

## Appendix G continued

### The social background of pupils in CoE schools

Area of social deprivation (D); Area of social deprivation but a sizeable number from favourable background D(m); Area of social advantage (A); Free school meal (FSM); Statement of special education needs (SEN); 5 or more A\*-C passes at GCSE; Unauthorised absence (UA)

School	Location	FSM (%)	SEN (%)	A*-C (%)	UA (%)
St Andrew	D(M)	16	28	42	1.0
Christ Church	D	36	1.9	40	2.8
St Mary	D	28	1.0	40	4.7
St Nicholas	D	10	2.7	73	0.7
St Helen	D	13	4.7	26	2.2
St Matthew	D	50	4.6	34	0.5
All Saints	D	38	3.6	28	1.1
St Michael	D	18	1.9	60	0.2
St Leonard	D	35	0.7	43	0.6
St Katharine	D	38	4.8	26	1.8
St Philip	D	57	1.8	36	1.9
St Saviour	D	62	1.9	56	0.3
St Saviour and St Olave	D	18	1.7	57	1.3
Saint John	D	17	2.6	87	1.0
St Augustine	D	58	2.1	36	2.0

## Appendix G continued

### The social background of pupils in Roman Catholic Schools

Area of social deprivation (D); Area of social deprivation but a sizeable number from favourable background D(m); Area of social advantage (A); Free school meal (FSM); Statement of special education needs (SEN); 5 or more A\*-C passes at GCSE; Unauthorised absence (UA)

School	Location	FSM (%)	SEN (%)	A*-C (%)	UA (%)
St Thomas More	D	21	2.5	44	0.8
St Bernard	D(m)	6	1.5	60	0.5
Convert Girls	D(m)	2	0.4	90	
St Joseph	D(m)	12	1.6	56	0.1
St Stephen	D	25	1.8	42	1.0
St Margaret	D(m)	8	0.8	83	0.2
St Benedict	A	4	1.6	75	0.4
St Lawrence	D(m)	4	1.0	74	0.2
Corpus Christi	A	4	0.9	84	0.1
Holy Family	D(m)	6	1.2	68	0.4
St Gabriel	A	2	1.2	88	
St Francis	D(m)	14	1.1	74	
St Eugene	D(m)	15	1.0	61	0.9
St Mark	D(m)	10	1.6	78	0.2
St Anselm	D(m)	9	4.4	46	0.5
St Edmund	D(m)	11	0.2	78	0.0
St Gregory	A	6	2.8	57	0.3
St John	D	17	1.8	54	0.8
The Holy Cross	D(m)	10	1.0	67	
St Andrew	D(m)	10	3.2	66	0.8
St Peter	D(m)	8	2.3	68	0.3
Paul	D(m)	10	1.3	55	1.0
St Vincent	A	8	3.4	47	0.5

## Appendix G continued

### The social background of pupils in Roman Catholic Schools

Area of social deprivation (D); Area of social deprivation but a sizeable number from favourable background D(m); Area of social advantage (A); Free school meal (FSM); Statement of special education needs (SEN); 5 or more A\*-C passes at GCSE; Unauthorised absence (UA)

School	Location	FSM (%)	SEN (%)	A*-C (%)	UA (%)
St Lazarus	D(m)	4.0	2.5	66	0.1
St Philip	D(m)	5.0	2.1	54	0.5
St Wilfrid	D(m)	4.0	3.1	58	0.5
Bp Douglass	D	25	2.3	42	2.8
Holy Angels	D	18	3.4	56	0.8
St Basil	D(m)	15	1.9	90	0.3
St Clement	D	17	2.6	69	0.4
St Bede	D	32	0.7	78	0.4
Sacred Heart	D	31	0.5	89	0.2
St Cyril	D(m)	27	3.0	47	0.3
St Martin	D	32	3.0	56	0.3
St Claire	D(m)	22	3.7	59	0.1
St Rita	D	55	4.1	69	0.4
St Brendan	D(m)	28	3.7	56	0.1
St Dominic	D	44	1.2	57	2.1
St Colette	D	56	10.3	38	0.4
St George	D	45	2.5	28	2.5

## Appendix G continued

### The Social background of pupils in LEA Schools

Area of social deprivation (D); Area of social deprivation but a sizeable number from favourable background D(m); Area of social advantage (A); Free school meal (FSM); Statement of special education needs (SEN); 5 or more A\*-C passes at GCSE; Unauthorised absence (UA)

School	Location	FSM	SEN	A*-C	UA
Joseph Clarke	D(m)	5	3.3	49	0.4
Warwick	D(m)	14	2.6	42	0.2
Ashburton	D	36	3.3	21	0.7
Eastbrook	D	30	2.2	27	1.8
Eastbury	D	50	1.0	17	4.0
Claverham	D(m)	15	1.2	75	1.4
Florence Nightingale	A	9	2.5	57	0.1
Pembroke High	D(m)	10	3.2	60	0.5
Bower Park	D	26	4.8	3.2	1.4
Broomhill	A	8	1.5	42	1.5
Beaumont	A	5	2.0	66	0.3
Breckfield	A	10	1.4	49	0.4
Queensmead	D	15	2.2	58	0.5
New Heys	D(m)	4	2.8	37	1.6
Highview	D(m)	14	1.4	24	0.9
Southlands	D	14	2.0	36	0.9
Meadowfield	D	19	6.3	60	1.2
The Westlands	D	14	4.6	41	0.5
Southborough	D	18	2.2	38	1.4
Parklands	A	4	2.3	64	0.6
Sutton Park	D(m)	6	2.5	59	1.9
Ashcomor Avenue	A	4	1.0	76	0.4
Bourne	D	14	3.1	51	0.6
Uplands	A	5	2.2	73	0.2
Warden Park	A	3	2.5	65	0.2
Queen Elizabeth	A	4	3.4	57	0.9
The Compton	D(m)	17	4.4	65	0.4
Valley Park	D(m)	10	3.2	60	0.6
Featherstone High	D	34	2.3	45	0.8

## Appendix G continued

### The Social background of pupils in LEA Schools

Area of social deprivation (D); Area of social deprivation but a sizeable number from favourable background D(m); Area of social advantage (A); Free school meal (FSM); Statement of special education needs (SEN); 5 or more A\*-C passes at GCSE; Unauthorised absence (UA)

School	Location	FSM	SEN	A*-C	UA
Crown Woods	D	24	3.7	36	6.0
Brookfield	D	33	4.7	57	3.7
Phoenix	D	56	2.2	28	0.8
Netherhall	D	48	2.4	36	0.9
Norwood	D	53	3.3	68	0.6
Crofton	D	48	2.2	37	4.4
William Morris	D	53	2.3	47	2.0
Kingsdale	D	63	3.5	21	2.9
Jubilee High	D	80	3.8	42	1.8
Oakley	D	46	4.0	37	4.5
Thorpe	D(m)	21	3.2	37	3.5



## Appendix H

### **Published correspondence between The Archbishop of Birmingham and the Secretary of State for Education**

The Rt Hon Alan Johnson  
Secretary of State for Education and Skills  
Department for Education and Skills  
Sanctuary Buildings  
Westminster  
London  
SW1P 3BT

2<sup>nd</sup> October 2006

Dear Mr Johnson

Catholic schools contribute considerably to social cohesion. I am also aware, however, that it is a timely moment at which to make this important aspect of the work of Catholic schools more widely known and transparent.

I am, therefore pleased to share with you our intention, as a community, to revise our S48/50 inspection frameworks to ensure that judgements about the contribution Catholic schools and sixth form colleges make to social cohesion are placed in the public domain.

Catholic education promotes inclusion both within and beyond schools. The new frameworks will ensure that inspection reports make clear the racial, ethnic and social make-up of our student bodies and set out how our schools contribute to the personal and social development of pupils, some of whom are in the most socially disadvantaged areas of England and Wales.

Catholic schools are among the most ethnically and socially diverse in the country. We already encourage our schools to work with other schools (including those serving other faith communities and those with no faith affiliation) to promote social cohesion. For example, the Catholic Education Service, in partnership with the twenty-two Catholic dioceses of England and Wales, has supported Catholic schools and sixth form colleges in the establishment of relationships with other institutions and work-place providers to support both the *extended schools initiative* and *14-19 Implementation Plan*.

We will pilot our new inspection arrangements over the next few months. From January 2007, they will cover all S48/50 inspections. Possible indicators include:

- Proportion of Catholics and of minority ethnic groups in the Catholic school (pupils and staff)
- Extent to which the needs of children of other faiths or none are met by the school
- The school's ethos, how it supports all students and how they experience the values of the Gospel and teachings of the Church in practice

## Appendix H continued

- Involvement of the school in the wider community and its links with other schools, whether of other denomination, faith or none
- Citizenship education in the school
- Curriculum issues – social and cultural development; preparation for life in a multicultural society; stewardship of the environment
- Applying the Catholic teachings on the dignity of all human beings, equal to one another, and the extent to which this is made real in the school
- The welcome and integration of immigrants/asylum seekers/different ethnic groups into the community
- Extent to which the spiritual and faith dimensions of a community or cultural group are explored and understood and an appreciation of the traditions of others
- Provision of a pattern of moral reasoning to inform pupils' decisions
- Focus on the idea of a community in which pupils are appreciated as members and participants rather than one focused only on tolerance and individualism
- Service to others in word and deed
- Understanding of the Church, both local and universal, as a community and in its relationship with the world
- Church and inter-faith dialogue as experienced through the school

We will share this development with other colleagues who have responsibilities for schools with a religious character, maintained and independent. We hope that they will share our aspiration to promote social cohesion and draw on our experience in the development of their own S48/50 frameworks.

In conclusion, as I have said previously in writing on 'Why I Keep Faith In Our Schools':

"Social cohesion needs to be based on the recognition of the following three observable characteristics of human nature: fundamentally we are meant to live in community, not as isolated individuals; secondly we are, by nature, spiritual beings; thirdly our spiritual nature finds fulfilment in religious belief. Education which recognises and serves these characteristics is rounded and sound. In these ways, 'faith schools' actually serve social cohesion properly understood and are a force for good in our society".<sup>53[1]</sup>

I look forward to continuing to work with other partners from faith groups and beyond so that we all educate in ways that nurture love for our fellow human beings, and promote the understanding and skills necessary to live harmoniously in mutual appreciation.

Yours sincerely

**The Most Reverend Vincent Nichols**  
**Archbishop of Birmingham**

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